DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 936 EA 011 717

AUTHOR	Goble, Norman M.
TITLE	Half a Revolution: Aspects of Change in the Canadian High School.
INSTITUTION	Canadian Teachers' Federation, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE	77
NOTE	102p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Canadian Teachers' Federation, 110 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2P 1B4 ($3.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Characteristics; Collective Bargaining; *Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; *Equal Education; *Institutional Characteristics; Resource Allocations; *School Role; Secondary Education; *Student Characteristics; Teacher Characteristics; Vocational Education; Youth
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

These essays reflect experiences during a series of visits paid to schools in eight Canadian provinces during the fall and winter 1975-76. The object of these visits was to explore the nature of the recent changes in students and in the formal institution of education. What is argued is that both morality and rationality require that the primary goal served by school programs be the healthy and successful integration of the individual, as a responsible and self-regulating adult, into the social collectivity; and that pursuit of this goal be open to everyone, and as far as possible facilitated equally for everyone, whatever may be his or her strengths, weaknesses, talents, needs, handicaps, or interests. Also examined are factors that complicate and hamper the achievement of these goals as they are revealed in current practices and trends in Canadian classrooms. The author concludes that educational changes so far accomplished have been more cosmetic than real, and if we try to rest content with half a revolution we shall swing rapidly back to a state of inadequacy that will call into question the whole system of compulsory schooling. (Author/JM)

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HALF A REVOLUTION

Aspects of Change in the Canadian High School

NORMAN M. GOBLE

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Canadian Teachers' Federation
110 Argyle Ave., Ottawa, K2P 1B4

1977

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CTF Publication No. C-77302
ISBN 0 88989 027 7

Published by The Canadian Teachers' Federation
110 Argyle Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1P 2B4

FOREWORD

Four years ago Maurice Gibbons wrote: "The formal institution of education will respond to the transformation of its student clientele and to the gathering forces that endanger the quality of human existence. Otherwise it will be changed by dynamics beyond its control, or it will be abandoned."*

These essays are a record of reactions to a series of visits paid to schools and school systems in eight Canadian provinces during the fall and winter, 1975-76. They consist, indeed, of the gist of many scores of conversations with students, teachers, parents, administrators, trustees, politicians, citizens. The object of these encounters, which took place during a half-year sabbatical leave from service with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, was to explore the nature of the "transformation of the student clientele" since my own departure from classroom teaching twelve years ago. I wanted to learn something of how the "formal institution of education" was responding or being changed, and what all this meant in terms of the real life of teachers and students in secondary schools – the level of schooling at which I worked as a teacher, and at which I felt most able to understand what I saw and heard.

This does not claim to be a research study. It is a highly subjective report of a random and limited sampling. What I think I can fairly claim, however, is that it reflects the realities I saw and the opinions that were expressed to me. I kept no count of the number of people who took time to talk to me, but I did keep copious notes; and these chapters are a blending of the essence of what was harvested. Perhaps it is tainted by the biases of my own quarter-century of professional involvement in education, but the main substance of it was really contributed by the people I interviewed – people in the thick of things.

To everyone I spoke to I promised anonymity. That is why direct quotations are not attributed to sources, and why I am prevented, at this point, from properly recording my deep appreciation of the tremendous helpfulness, candour and hospitality I encountered everywhere.

Three impressions remain predominant from what was altogether a remarkable experience. One is of the extraordinary openness of Canadian schools to observation and interrogation, and the willingness of everyone concerned with them to explain and interpret. The second is of the high quality and quite remarkable level of commitment among teachers. The third is of the encouraging attitude of the majority of students. For the most part, they are more knowledgeable, more responsible, more courteous and much more self-assured than any of their predecessors. Schools, teachers and students are much maligned these days. Most of the criticism is ill-informed and ill-considered; much of it is downright silly. I only wish that those who rush to climb on the anti-school bandwagon would, instead, take time out to visit a school.

* *M. Gibbons, "The Search for a Powerful Method of Training Teachers" in The Teacher's Changing Role in the School of the Future. Morges (Switzerland): WCOTP, 1972.*

INTRODUCTION

The social consensus in Canada, insofar as it can be said to exist, sentences young people – all young people – to a period of ten or twelve years in school before admittance to adult society.

The converse of this proposition is that school (and, in view of the 10-12 year time span, secondary school in particular) must qualify young people – all young people – to be adults.

What is argued in the following chapters is that both morality and rationality require:

(a) that the primary goal served by school programs be the healthy and successful integration of the individual. as a responsible and self-regulating adult, into the social collectivity; and

(b) that the pursuit of this goal be open to everyone, and as far as possible facilitated equally for everyone, whatever may be his or her strengths, weaknesses, talents, needs, handicaps or interests.

If this thesis is pursued, it leads to the identification of a series of imperatives for the design and conduct of school programs.

First is the definition of the skills and knowledge required for confident, constructive and competent management of individual life (both work and leisure), and for responsible participation in an *evolving* society.

Second is the assessment of the characteristics and needs of individual students at the starting point.

Third is the provision for progression from dependence towards autonomy, through development of the ability to make knowledgeable choices and the progressive transfer of responsibility.

Fourth is the commitment of the school to supportiveness -- to setting people upon their own feet.

Fifth is the provision, during the school years, of a sound basis for future learning (i. e., steadily increasing emphasis upon, and training in the skills of, self-learning), in modes appropriate to the student's interests and talents, whether it be related to vocation, avocation, or the maintenance of personal well-being or social competence.

This line of argument leads also to the rejection, as illegitimate and immoral, of the use of the school as an instrument of selection for special preferment, social ranking, subjugation to minority interests, or the promotion of the special interests of any sector or faction in society. It leads us to oppose the principle of antagonistic or punitive evaluation or screening. It rules out processes and procedures which lead to a final judgment of "failure" – since that would amount to a declaration that the student is unfit to become an adult! – and, for similar reasons, it rules out the possibility of expulsion.

In real life, however, tidy lines of reasoning and logic do not run far without encountering tangles and breaks. A serious attempt to put into effect the kind of commitment suggested above is bound to be hampered and, to some degree, thwarted by the complicating factors of social and human reality.

Among these may be mentioned the following:

The school does not start its work on a clean slate. Its work will always be complicated, and its efforts sometimes entirely frustrated, by problems which have their origin outside the school and may have no solution within the school. But there is always *something* that the school can do if it looks upon its clients with realism and compassion. After all, the doctor who takes the Hippocratic oath swears only to heal *sometimes* but to comfort always.

The secondary school deals with teen-aged human beings, not with programmed robots. Those who engage in its programs are also engaged, willy-nilly, in the erratic and often turbulent journey through adolescence.

The complexity of society, and particularly of contemporary urban society, makes it a matter of extreme difficulty to decide what forms of learning, in what areas, must be provided by the school, as opposed to the home, the general community, and other special agencies; and this decision will be different in each individual case.

The widened range of responsibility assumed by the democratized high school brings with it the need to identify, develop and maintain a correspondingly broad range of competencies in teachers.

In this demanding situation of widened responsibility and deepened involvement, the human and personal needs of teachers (considerations of stress, career satisfaction, reward and so forth) become increasingly important.

The determination of priorities in the allocation of scarce resources becomes quite agonizingly difficult, and provokes more bitter resentment, as the school's involvement in education grows.

As the school moves further into the reality of society, into the lives of its students, and into commitment to the educative purpose, it becomes more difficult, and also more important, to accommodate appropriate diversity within a coherent and manageable institutional framework. Tension between the teaching practitioner and the system administrator is bound to increase, especially because change in *institutional* orientation (as opposed to change in the mode and style of individual teacher behaviour within the institution) will attract public attention and arouse some alarming reactions. Administrators, therefore, will tend to be hesitant, and may even be unable, to bring about the change in the institutional framework that would accommodate and confirm the operational changes mentioned above. Dissonance and conflict may show up in a number of areas, ranging from examination and reporting policy to teacher classification and even the whole basis of collective bargaining.

Political expediency may well complicate the process of change. It is easier (and usually safer) for a politician to read and respond to current public perceptions than to try to amend them. Besides, the attempt to change public expectations of the secondary school is likely to meet highly organized resistance from vested interests.

The teaching profession itself, partly because of its need to protect itself against unreasonable pressures from those whose social and educational concepts are sadly obsolete, may find that it is tying its own hands with legalistic and contractual constraints that are not in its own interests or those of its clients.

Finally, the pursuit of equity and equality, and even the exercise of compassion (without which no society deserves to flourish) must not be allowed to check the emergence of talent or to prevent us from recognizing excellence (without which no society can flourish) -- provided that our concept of excellence makes sense within some reasonable and defensible definition of the public good.

The chapters which follow take a look at some of these topics as they reveal themselves in current practices and trends in Canadian classrooms.

HALF A REVOLUTION

Aspects of Change in the Canadian High School

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I. SCHOOLAG CANADA

In common with most nations, and certainly the more developed nations, Canada takes the view that a period of ten or twelve years of formal schooling should precede the entry of young people into adult life.

Schools are not a novelty in this country, and a statement of this kind may sound bland and unremarkable. Actually, it is nothing of the sort. If it is taken seriously, it is a commitment to educational change of a far more radical kind than was earlier imagined. What was thought, in the expansionist era of the sixties, to be only a quantitative change – access by more people to more schooling – has turned out to be a profound change in philosophy and purpose.* The task of putting it into real effect – if it *is* put into *real* effect – will strain the capabilities of the educational systems of the country to their limits, and it is already clear that it will not be allowed to happen without opposition. Indeed, the stress of conflict between the demands for appropriate change and its opponents, who are only now rallying their forces, may well provoke a more serious crisis than any that the institution of public education has yet had to face. Combined with the turbulence produced by other conflicts in and around the schools, these stresses will, within the next five or ten years, bring about the real possibility of a catastrophic breakdown in secondary education.

Perhaps, then, it is timely to try to define some of the basic questions.

It must be noted, in passing, that many Canadians suffer a reflex twitch of apprehension when they see the word "Canada" in print. When it appears in an educational context, the twitch becomes a spasm. There can be few countries in which the vision of the national identity is so blurred by the protective screens of local patriotism, and there is no topic which brings those screens clattering into place so rapidly as that of education. "Education," runs the slogan, "is a provincial matter." It isn't, of course, any more than pollution or child labour or divorce, or any other of the social concerns that lie within provincial jurisdiction. Decision

* *This point is crucial, and cannot be too heavily emphasized. "When an educational system changes in scale," observes one commentator, "it also changes function, though this change is not explicit. The social and cultural objectives concealed behind the academic definition of levels lose their significance, while educators and administrators deplore the deterioration of models whose structures and criteria have, unbeknown to them, changed. Seeing the situation in this mistaken light, they often make costly and pitiful efforts to restore levels which are now no more than shadows, outdated and out of place in today's circumstances."*
(Hennion, R., in Education on the Move. Paris, Unesco, 1975.)

as to the arrangements made for the handling of these matters is a prerogative of the provincial legislatures: that is what the Constitution says, and that is all that it means . The social, economic and physical movements which create the need for schooling; the broad concepts, the beliefs, and the problems and challenges, to which provincial legislators must respond; these things are neither created nor contained within the borders of the provinces. No efforts of any provincial Canute can stop the tides of social change, or prevent them either from eroding institutions or from creating popular consensus at a basic level. The demand for a period of ten to twelve years of preliminary schooling is sustained by a Canadawide consensus, whether we choose to recognize it or not. "For at least the next decade," said the 1973 Worth report*, "it is difficult to be persuaded that diluting or discarding existing compulsory schooling laws would be wise." The statement happened to be made in Alberta. It may as well be read as a Canadian opinion.

To return, then, to the first statement: the general sentiment in Canada at the present time is that passage through the level of schooling which we call "secondary" should no longer be an option reserved for those who seek access to some higher level of study, to better-paid jobs, or eventually to the small and select companies of social commanders and independent professionals. Instead, it has become the required means of entry, for the vast majority of Canadians, into adult society.

The implications are enormous. As long as the high school was seen as an avenue leading to exceptional advantage, it was normal and proper that it concentrate on the measurement of performance in a narrow range of skills, in order to identify the exceptional and exclude the ordinary. As long as it was primarily a path towards certification for entry into other institutions at various "levels"– these levels being defined and maintained by powerful conventions – it was proper to set up appropriate obstacles, of a highly specific and artificial kind. That made sure that the only people who reached the end would be those who would be acceptable to the controllers of the institutions which they sought to enter. Others, along the way, would be eased out with credentials less exclusive but still distinctive at some agreed level, and those who were wrong in thinking themselves fit for an exceptional rating at all could be made aware of their inadequacies and sent off to find something else to do.

The high school, as most adults remember it, was a filter. It was a selective, distributive device, separating students into levels and categories for the convenience of the other institutions and agencies of society. It had no obligations

* *Alberta, Cabinet Committee on Education. A Choice of Futures. Report of the Commission on Educational Planning. Edmonton, The Queen's Printer for the Province of Alberta, 1972.*

either to those who did not want to be processed or to those whom it rejected. Since the method of separation was by count of the errors made by students in a series of closely-watched ordeals, the school might be said to have been negative and antagonistic in its orientation. This is not a reproach. To sort people – or things – by discovering the level at which they "fail" is simple, convenient and economical, and for the selective high school it was, in its day, a justifiable procedure. So was the enforcement of effort by the promise of preferment and the threat of exclusion.

But if we decide, as we seem to have done, that schooling at the secondary level is to be a minimum qualification for *anyone* who seeks admission to adult status (as well as the last exposure, for most people, to formal teaching), if in fact it ceases to be an option leading to special advantage, and is seen as a compulsory preparation for adult life for everyone, then the emphasis on making people fail becomes improper and immoral. The purposes and procedures that were proper to the differentiating, distributive function must be replaced by those which are proper to the function of preparing people for reasonable competence in the ordinary business of living. The attitude of the school, in other words, has to be positive and supportive. The notion of student "failure", in the sense of total exclusion from further schooling, is untenable when there is nowhere else for the student to go (though still, of course, perfectly valid if we are talking about an attempt to master some specific skill that is realistically related to a precise goal.)

Moreover, a school which is charged with preparing people for life must change the focus of its attention from retrospect to prediction. Its programs must be based on careful and far-seeing prediction of the skills its students will need in the business of living, and when it evaluates its students it must do so by trying to estimate their competence to face the future rather than by tagging them with a record of their past performance in arbitrary and artificial exercises.

The morality of evaluation, in fact, is reversed: instead of the school passing judgement upon the student, it becomes appropriate for the student to pass judgement upon the school.

These are crucial changes. They have been explicitly proclaimed by a number of provincial commissions, and they are implicit in the evolution of educational policies in almost every province. How widely their implications are understood and accepted is, however, very uncertain.

There is much evidence that teachers and administrators realize what is happening, though they do not all like it. Parents, generally, do not seem to have understood very well; trustees even less so. As for the guardians of other

institutions – universities, business, industry – the overwhelming majority, if they understand at all, seem to be outraged by what they see as the collapse of the barriers which made up the outer defences of their own systems of preferment and appropriate ranking. Yet the logic of the situation is compelling. If the school cannot adapt, or is not allowed to, it is in danger of being discredited as an institution.

Like it or not, the Canadian secondary school is committed to changing its orientation and its mode of operation from antagonistic to supportive. The degree of change so far achieved varies greatly from place to place, as does the strength of the reaction which change is provoking.

In the meantime, the immediate practical effect of the assumption that ten or twelve years of school are necessary for everyone is that all young Canadians are sentenced (those under sixteen by legislation, those under eighteen or so by economic and social sanction) to confinement for more than half of the days of the year in a place where they are required to perform assigned tasks under supervision. This may be the right thing to do, but when the detainees ask us why, we really ought to have a convincing answer, both for their sake and for the guidance of their guardians. Moreover, morality would seem to require that our methods conform to our professed purpose. At the heart of the matter, then, are two questions. Why is it necessary? And how should the necessary objectives be pursued?

Schooling is an odd kind of activity. It is carried on with great zeal and energy day after day, involving far more people, at far more cost, than any other enterprise in Canada. Its procedures are set up and carried out, for the most part, with exemplary efficiency (not surprisingly, since the ranks of those who work in and around the schools include, without any doubt, some of the most able and talented people in the country) and with a notable absence of the eye-catching and profligate waste of time, money and resources that is so rife in industry, in the administration of government and in public institutions. But it is very intolerant of simple questions. Complicated questions are all right: there is a fine stock of complicated answers to draw upon. The vocabulary of learned dialogue is constantly being extended and refurbished. But the simple question "how?" is disturbing, "what?" causes marked uneasiness, and "why?" is almost an obscenity.

It might be argued, in defence, that the same is true about all the major activities of society and of living, and even about life itself. The enigma of life is a familiar truism, a favourite theme of the poets:

> Into this universe, the why not knowing,
> Nor whence, like water willy-nilly flowing,
> And out of it, like wind along the waste,
> We know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.

So we may say, with ponderous wisdom (and some, indeed, do say) that school is like life itself -- a period of confinement in a place of forced labour, doubtless for our ultimate good, or at least for the good of our souls, a proper subject for discussion in terms of its complicated specifics, but not to be crudely interrogated in monosyllables.

But the assignment of someone to school is not an act of God, to be borne with patient and pious puzzlement. It is a deliberate act of man. Why, then, should we tolerate this reluctance to be interrogated?

Confined between involuntary birth and inevitable death, confined within the limits of behaviour that permit survival and promote reproduction, mankind coalesces into communities. The condition of living *together* imposes further restraints on behaviour, makes necessary the definition of categories. Certain categories of people are kept outside the general community, and subjected to further confinement and coercion. They are the misfits. They are the people who cannot or will not conform to the pattern of approved activities. Some are judged to be criminal, some insane, some immature. For whatever reason, they are barred from participation in the society of responsible adults and committed to the care of s, ific institutions until such time as they can show their readiness for integration — committed to prison, to hospital or to school.

Proof of readiness for return to society consists of a demonstration that some skills considered essential to individual and collective survival have been mastered, and that the prevailing codes of taboo and myth (the two components of morality) have been internalized. The latter is the guarantee of commitment to behaviour conforming to the collective interest. The former is the guarantee of capability.

In other words, the function of education is to ensure the integration of the individual into the social collectivity. This implies both the postponement of acceptance until integration has been accomplished *and* the provision of a program of learning which progressively and effectively prepares people for self-regulating participation in communal life.

Schooling is the deliberate management of the integrative process. To compel attendance at school is to say that in a complex society the process has to be specially and artificially organized. The moral commitment that goes with this is that of ensuring that it takes place as successfully as possible – that is to say, to the maximum benefit both of the individual and of the collectivity.

In this context, it is very difficult to find justification for pronouncing the verdict of "failure" upon an individual, since it must mean the failure of the

integrative process. Admittedly, there will always be some individuals who are not able to be integrated. For genetic reasons, or as a consequence of physical, emotional or psychic injury, there will always be a certain number of people who suffer from physical, intellectual or moral incapacity to such a degree that they must be kept segregated. In principle, however, "failure" without such justification must be held to be the fault of the institution, not of the individual. Why, on what grounds, is it ever right to tell an individual that he or she has "failed" to become a self-regulating adult?

This is not the place to argue whether it is right or wrong that society should lay so much of the responsibility for the integrative process upon the institution of the school. I believe that the necessity of doing so, in a complex society, is self-evident, however open to criticism the *means* of doing so may be. In any case, though, the principle is generally accepted by Canadian policy-makers. The job of the high school is not to screen people out, but to escort them into adult life.

Between principle and practice, however, lie two sets of obstinately difficult problems. Even if we agree on *why* schooling is necessary, these complicate the second question – *how* should the necessary objectives be pursued?

The first set reflects the fragmented nature of the social collectivity in Canada. There is a choice of adjectives here: the optimistic will use "pluralistic", the pessimist "disintegrating". Either way, the point is that there is no strong, coherent doctrine in Canada to regulate social goals or define the collective interest. This makes it extremely difficult to insist with any confidence upon the necessity for particular skills or upon the authority of any particular set of taboos and myths. Besides, the context of social life is changing so rapidly that both forms of learning, resting as they do upon our perceptions of what was useful or desirable in the past, are of very questionable usefulness for the future.

While we wait – perhaps vainly – for a social consensus on such matters to take shape, there is a serious risk that the school will fall captive to one or other of the contending factions in our disunited society (pluralistic or disintegrating), and will be used both to encourage the mode of behaviour most favourable to the interests of that group and to select and promote those individuals who are found by test to be most apt for an appropriate domestication. To use the compulsory universality of schooling as a means of ensuring that everyone is screened for suitability and indoctrinated as far as possible, in terms of minority interests, with the majority then being rejected and assigned to exploitation by the favoured few, is to use it as an instrument of alienation, not integration. That would be a flagrant immorality. But where a general social consensus is lacking, it is a real possibility. There are those who claim that it is, to some extent, a fact. There are others who would like it to be a fact.

The second set of problems arises from the nature of institutions. Once created, institutions immediately take on a life of their own, developing their own purposes, their own value systems, and their own regulatory mechanisms. Considerations of status and prestige, derived from these, become very powerful. Skills, taboos, and myths tending to ensure institutional survival are strongly favoured. The institution, in fact, shows all the characteristics of a miniature society. Unless the mandate given to it by the larger society is continuously and insistently re-examined, a drift into artificiality, alienation and obsolescence is inevitable. In the absence of a strong, over-arching social doctrine, it is dangerously likely.

A discussion of the kind of artificiality and consequent obsolescence that the institution of the school is prone to would be a topic for another book -- has, indeed, been the topic of many books and articles. The one point I want to stress here is that the school prepares young people for the rites of passage into the adult world. It may do so either by setting up ordeals that will be survived only by those who will be most useful, by temperament and training, to certain dominant groups, or by encouraging the development of whatever innate strengths and powers each individual possesses, and teaching how these may best be exercised for personal survival and collective well-being. The assertion made in the preceding pages is that Canadian schools are committed to a shift from the first of these modes to the second. But there is a real danger that they may do neither – that they may, instead, impose criteria of acceptability based on those skills which are most easily taught and measured *in school* whether or not they are really applicable to any situation in later life.

Let us go back a couple of steps, and look at the ample evidence of how the rites of passage are administered in societies that do not yet have formal schooling.

Initiation into adult society requires a demonstration that the candidate has mastered the key skills of individual and collective survival and has learned and internalized the standard code of taboo and myth. The former proves him capable of "right" action; the latter ensures that he will *choose* to act "rightly". This initiation is formalized, institutionalized, long before it is found necessary to institutionalize the learning process. Graduation exists long before the school does.

For obvious reasons of convenience, a symbolic demonstration of readiness, in a solemn public ceremony, tends to take the place of the actual exercise of the desired skills. Initiatory ritual and symbolism, in fact, often in a very elaborate and artificial form, take on an enormous importance. Knowledge of the mysteries of symbolic communication, more and more highly refined as time goes by, soon becomes an end in itself, a means of entry to a social class more highly esteemed than the workers and warriors.

When schooling, in its turn, is formalized and institutionalized, there is a strong temptation for the institution to focus excessively closely on the arts of symbolic communication, to rate lore higher than skill, and to set up evaluative criteria accordingly.

This tendency was especially strong in the formative era of the European educational systems, and survives in our own academic traditions. Moreover, the human inventions of symbolism (language and numbers), quite apart from whatever practical utility they possessed, had the advantage of being thoroughly and exactly knowable, unlike the baffling phenomena of the real world. Mastery could, therefore, be quantified: it was easy to measure scholarship in those disciplines, and so to establish levels of comparative status. That was important in a highly stratified society, and especially in a society in which elegant artificiality was a proof of high rank. Created in the first instances to serve the needs of the upper classes by creating appropriate ordeals and credentials, the European and British high schools and their colonial derivatives have tended to perpetuate a status system based on the quantity of knowledge possessed in the disciplines related to symbolic communication, and, indeed, upon an obstinate preference for artificiality over mundane reality. Institutions of education too often show a value system based on these traditions, and have been too successful in persuading the uninitiated public to accept their values.

It is easy, of course, and quite wrong, to discount the skills of symbolic communication too much. There are certain occupations in which they are very necessary, and certain levels at which they are necessary in every occupation. Since it is necessary, as part of the process of integrating people into society, to conduct them towards their appropriate vocation, a school which does not provide appropriate training in communication is short-changing its clients. Besides, the liberation of self-expression is a real step towards building a sound self-image – a crying need in these days of urban decay and family dissolution, and a necessary condition of becoming a whole person, able to participate usefully in a healthy society. People who cannot say or write what they think and mean are going to find themselves vocationally handicapped and personally frustrated.

So the *use* of the symbols of communication – words, numbers and images – is at the core of learning. The trick is to distinguish useful, growth-promoting learning (real competence in transactional and expressive communication) from the empty conceits of an effete scholasticism. Seneca charged the teachers of his day with "preparing people not for life, but for the schools". Nineteen centuries later, we must feel similar concern over the prevalence of pressures and practices which, in the alienated institution of the school, perpetuate the models of the "good teacher" and the "good student", without enough regard for the need of conver-

gence towards the realities of living. Knowledge, like money, has value only in use, not in hoarding or display. It is useless unless it brings with it the power to do things better and the will to do better things.

To impose upon students the demands of academic "disciplines" is justifiable only to the extent that accurate learning is necessary for effective doing. As an end in itself, and as a general measure of quality, it is a survival of the false and silly snobberies of an alienated institution. Proclaimed as a means of "teaching people to think" or making "a better person", it invites a cyncial response and provokes the question "Is there no better way? "

There are philosophical arguments here that the teaching profession should be pursuing, and which will be touched on again in later chapters. They must not be ignored or brushed aside, because they underlie and influence decisions on educational policy. They are mentioned here, though, only because they complicate the practical problems of making our adolescent detainees fit for integration into adult society. The real, demonstrable need for competence in reading, writing and computing is being twisted into false and cruel propaganda by those who want the schools to be instruments of exploitation, of social ranking or of academic snobbery.

Almost all the present problems of adjustment in the secondary school – the problems which have caused a near breakdown in schools in the major cities of the U.S.A., and are growing daily more grave in Canada – arise from the retention of students who in the past would have been screened out. They have stayed in school not because they were drawn into it by what it had to offer, but because there was nothing for them anywhere else. Economic conditions and social change, and the political response to these, have thrust them into the classroom. They are political prisoners of the school. "It's been laid on them," as one high school principal put it, "it's not of their own choosing."

As long as the school does not accomplish the shift from the antagonistic to the supportive mode, it cannot hope to do much good for these uninvited, involuntary guests. To expect teachers simply to keep them submissively in custody, without appropriate powers of restraint, is unreasonable. What happens is that stress rises to intolerable levels, while those students who do have talents, and an objective, which are compatible with the academic orientation of the school are cheated out of their share of the time, the energy and the attention of the teacher. Student motivation and teacher effectiveness suffer.

The school has scarcely yet had time to figure out what to do with these students, who in the past would have been dismissed as "failures".[1] To give them

1 *And still would be, if some had their way. "Forty-five percent of the students in high school," said one school board chairman, "have no business being there." When asked where they ought to go, he retracted his statement.*

the illusion of "success" [2] in the terms of the scholastic establishment by diluting the content of courses that were never meant to answer their needs, and by lowering the standards of "attainment" until they come close to passing examinations, is as pointless as it is dishonest. If they are deceived, the school has done wrong in making them think that they can do that which they really cannot do. If they are not deceived, they have been taught contempt for schooling. If they think that what they have seemed to accomplish will matter in their lives, they will eventually be disillusioned. If they realize that it will not, their contempt will be deepened.

If there are no good reasons for the student to be studying the *kind* of subject in question, the farce of pretended evaluation does not cancel out the futility of the original attempt. Two follies do not make wisdom. If the demands made by the "discipline" are beyond the powers of the student, not in quantitative terms but in *kind* (a possibility which is quite real but which is overlooked by "mastery learning" theorists), a charitable evaluation only conceals the truth and confuses judgement. To award easier "passes" in unsuitable studies instead of developing more appropriate curriculum, centered on the competencies needed for adult life, is a mockery of education.

Meanwhile, as earlier remarked, those students who have a reason for pursuing abstract and academic studies, and who could do so successfully, are cheated of recognition of real achievement. Each lowering of the level of acceptable achievement results in a lowering of the level of effort, of respect for mastery, and of morale. Quantitative changes are no substitute for qualitative changes – but may add up to qualitative changes of a kind that was never wanted.

Dilution of the content of a schooling that was designed to have a screening, selective effect, and the deliberate blunting of the instrument of selection, are not appropriate responses to changing circumstances. They are a caricature of democracy.

On the other hand, it is wrong for the school to bend all its efforts to creating an in-school situation that pleases and satisfies the student, in compensation for its failure to equip him with real competence for future living. The zeal with which some reformers pursue the goal of a congenial school as an end in itself is the measure of their failure to devise a satisfactory *preparatory* education – an effective way of integrating the individual into society. It highlights the fact that school, as an institution, is in constant danger of becoming an alienating force rather than an integrating one.

2 *Significantly, the schools do not use the term "succeed": the opposite of "fail" is "pass", a term appropriate to a screening device.*

The only course that will justify the detention of young people in school for ten or twelve years is the development of a form of schooling that is satisfactorily integrative – bearing in mind that full participation in a democratic society implies not just present conformity but participation in the constant struggle for future improvement in the social condition – not indoctrination for passive acceptance but stimulation to work for change and reform. There must be real convergence towards life, a progressive assumption of responsibility going hand in hand with increasing competence in things that really matter.

It is the idea of convergence, with the implied notion of increasing independence, that bothers so many people.

"What I ask of the schools, as a parent," said one eastern Canadian (a university president in his professional life), "is that they teach my children to think for themselves. But not," he added after a moment's reflection, "to question the ideas and the values that I am instilling in them."

This is the customary lip-service to the goal of making people fit to run their own lives. The only unusual thing is the honesty with which, in this case, the professed aim was immediately contradicted by a candid admission of the desire to maintain control.

The fact is that you simply cannot have it both ways. Young people are going to become adults whatever we do, and whether we like it or not. If we believe that adults should be able to make up their own minds about things, using sound thought processes and handling evidence rationally, we must try to set up a school program leading towards autonomy. The ideal student, embodiment of the eternal child – obedient, deferential, attentive, faithfully seeking to please by behaving as he is told to and by accurately reproducing the information fed to him, in earnest competition with his peers – will not become a responsible, self-reliant adult magically, overnight, on graduating from school. The choice is between deliberately preparing people for the competent exercise of adult responsibility or deliberately impeding their evolution. We cannot stop them from becoming adults, but we *can* make it harder for them to become responsible, autonomous adults. And sometimes we do.

The concept of integration as the goal of education provokes argument in some quarters. Rampant individualism, fashionable as a doctrine in recent years, rejects it. So do the followers of various eccentric cults, although they practice their own form of integrative indoctrination. So also do the devotees of certain socio-political dogmas which have not achieved orthodoxy in Canada at the present time, though powerful elsewhere. For their various reasons, these various groups

are hostile to the idea that the school should promote any accommodation between the adolescent and the present institutions of society, claiming that the effort to do so is an insidious form of repressive indoctrination. The literature of the doctrinaire left, in fact, argues strongly that the school should teach contradiction rather than promote integration, and so prepare people for confrontation and revolutionary struggle.

On the other hand, there are powerful elements on the right wing of Canadian society which tend to justify the radical viewpoint by insisting that the integrative process should, in effect, be one of domestication. In this view, the schools should concentrate on making the individual as useful as possible in the service of dominant interests, and discourage any questioning of the code of values which favours free pursuit of advantage by those interests.

Both these viewpoints, in the historical perspective of education as a social activity, are aberrations. There is no reconciliation possible between them, nor any compromise with them. The committed educator must believe that the proper goal of education is the integration of a healthy, rational individual into a society which is in constant evolution, open to the input of new discoveries and new perceptions, and in which the efforts of individuals are marshalled into a collective pursuit of improved health and rationality. In asserting that belief, he may expect attacks from both wings, as well as a considerable amount of scepticism from various directions.

Yet there are two truths from which there is no escape. One is that no educational policy can operate for long in an open society, unless it is consistent with the prevailing mood of a substantial majority. Canadian society is open enough to make this element important, and probably decisive. The second is that a society whose educational policies do not encourage and support the development of a faculty of rational criticism, even when it is applied to the current social consensus, must eventually become stagnant or repressive, or both.

Evaluation and rational criticism of *all* doctrines are skills which the autonomous adult must be able to exercise. It follows that their development is a necessary goal of education. It may be remarked, incidentally, that there is a contradiction between the philosophical commitment to the free development of those skills and the practical need to keep their exercise within the limits that the social consensus will permit. This makes the formation of educational policy, and the design of the educational process, a matter of the highest political sensitivity.

So, to justify the continued detention of our young people at forced labour in the schools, we must demonstrate that we are offering them a clear road leading

both to autonomy and to successful social integration. This means a general orientation that supports the development of confident independence (the implications of which will be discussed in a later chapter), so that when they leave school they *are* adults, practised in the exercise of those rights and responsibilities which we associate with citizen status. It also means that the design of school programs and curriculum must start with identification of the range of competencies needed by a responsible and autonomous adult both for the efficient and satisfying management of his or her own life in the foreseeable future and for participation in the collective effort to improve the human condition. The next stage, of course, must be a deliberate decision about which competencies are least likely to be acquired informally and incidentally outside the school, and to which, therefore, priority must be given in the deliberate effort of schooling. The school must beware of asserting its right to attempt what can be done without it, but it must insist upon its moral obligation to do (and its expertise in doing) that which *cannot* be done without it.

This by no means prohibits the school from offering, as an additional service, instruction in specific vocational skills (in which term I include those disciplines which must be mastered, at least at a rudimentary level, as a preparation for further formal learning). It does mean, however, that the school has to be committed to the well-being of the majority rather than the preferment of a minority. It is ironical indeed that in a professed democracy this should seem to be such a revolutionary proposition.

II. PRESENT REALITIES

Three characteristics of the secondary school seem to persist with special obstinacy, no matter what changes are made in program and method. They are its academic emphasis, its habit of evaluating its clients, and its isolation from the surrounding world.

One reason why these things persist is that they are what the most influential elements in our society still expect of a secondary school. After all, the people who have most to say – and the most say – tend to be people who did well in the traditional system, and who therefore respect its workings and want to see it continued. Another reason is that it is easier to run a school that way than to make changes. So familiarity and apparent feasibility, both strong arguments in themselves, combine to arrest change.

Conservatism has three strong lines of defence. The first is the question "What would you put in its place? ". If something is serving a real purpose, it is certainly quite irresponsible to propose a change unless what is proposed would serve that purpose better, or would serve a better purpose. "When there is no good reason to change", said Winston Churchill with his usual shrewdness, "there is good reason not to change." The second line of defence is well illustrated by the lady, quoted in *Punch* some years ago, who said, "If God had meant us to fly, he wouldn't have given us trains". If you feel, as many do, that what was was Better than what is, you will tend to see innovation as a subversive heresy.

The third line of defence is the strongest. School is a social institution, intimately linked to society, and its functions are those which society has seen fit to assign to it. It is an organ of the body politic, and you can't change one organ unless the whole body is evolving. Or rather, you can only do so at the risk of serious harm to the organ and to the body that it belongs to. If you fiddle about with the structure of your liver, your whole system will suffer. Thousands of alcoholics prove that point every year by dying. How much change can the school take before the social system gets sick?

This point can, of course, be pressed too far. People are still being born with an appendix, although the body has evolved beyond the stage at which it was useful. The conservative may admire Nature's caution in reform, but in the meantime a lot of people get hurt for no good reason.

Academic emphasis shows up in various ways. The most immediately visible one is the tendency to reduce everything to a form in which it can be talked about, read about and written about. This is very prevalent, even in schools where really

serious attempts are being made to break out of the confines of the traditional curriculum (the old "sacred" subjects, revered because nobody can remember the practical reasons that put them in the school in the first place), and even in schools where a real effort is being made to get students to commit themselves to independent learning.

The good side of this is that it avoids the enormous waste of time, and the considerable risk, that is involved in getting first-hand experience. Also, it suits the reality of most school situations. Very few schools are built or operated in a way that makes it possible to do anything else on a regular basis except lecture groups of kids or make them write (as unoriginally and predictably as possible, since there is not time for the teacher to digest any original offering, still less respond to it thoughtfully or respectfully). Lectures and written exercises are feasible. Since we very readily fall into the logical trap of assuming that whatever is feasible is, for that reason, practical*, this gives them, in our eyes, a kind of indisputable moral superiority over "airy-fairy" alternatives.

The principal who told me that he has no time for innovation because it is mainly a matter of theory and slogan, and he is fully occupied with the practical business of getting the kids to learn in the real circumstances of the school, had a strong argument from the conservative viewpoint. If it works, he was saying, and you believe in it, you should get on with it with all your might. His academic students (some of whom he teaches himself, by way of setting an example) back him up by graduating with results that the school is proud of. On the other hand, they are a decreasing proportion of the school's growing population, and since their kind of performance provides the criteria of success for that particular school, teachers are getting worried. They talk about a progressive loss of pride in "achievement". Teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and English told me that they are having to "lower their standards" year by year to keep their students with them.

The bad side of the academic bias is that it pushes everything into the same mould. This is the paradox: the most feasible thing to do in the classroom is to avoid the practical – to study theory, to listen, memorize and replicate. That distorts the nature of knowledge and the nature of the learning process quite

* *The distinction becomes clear when we consider such modern phenomena as the hydrogen bomb, the supersonic airliner, the transformation of the atmosphere into unbreathable gaseous compounds, and the production of deformed children through chemical interference. All these have been proved to be feasible. Their practicality is, nevertheless, questionable. School offers countless examples of things done because they are feasible, but which have such bad educational effects that they cannot honestly be called practical.*

severely (it is a truism that school science is a terrible misrepresentation of the scientific method, and the reluctance with which kids apply themselves to the artificial drudgery of the traditional subjects is in instructive contrast to the ease with which they learn about the things that matter to them in their own lives). It separates matter from method, and sets a higher value on the latter than on the former.

Moreover, the academic tradition attaches the highest prestige to the kind of learning that is useless in itself, and serves only as a preamble to further study.

Most high schools continue to show a high degree of polarization. On the one hand, there are programs or courses which are almost impossible to justify except as a preparation for university studies. The academic secondary curriculum, too often, is still a random assortment of beginnings, leading nowhere, and graduates too often emerge with a burden of useless trivia – unrelated facts and verbal, numerical or symbolic formulae that will never have any meaning or application for them and which they will thankfully forget as soon as possible. On the other hand, as a concession to modern times, there are "vocational" courses and programs – shorthand, typing, book-keeping, welding, auto mechanics, drafting, dry cleaning, hairdressing and the like. These have drawbacks, too.

Generally speaking, business education seems to be the most successful to the vocational endeavours of the school. Its effectiveness increases considerably when emphasis is laid upon real work performance. "Model offices", contracting to produce work for other departments of the school, are working extremely well in several provinces, and work experience programs, in which students are placed in commercial offices for on-the-job learning, have proved their worth.

Next in value comes general workshop training -- experience with a variety of machine tools and basic industrial processes. A major problem here is the speed with which industrial equipment becomes obsolete. If the student can come to understand the kinds of things that machines accomplish, and the differences between a good job and a bad job, and especially if his schooling provides for periods of actual experience in a machine shop or factory, he will have a head start in the world of work. If he only learns how to operate the particular equipment that he finds in the school, however, he may not have gained much.

Specific trade training is of much more questionable value. It is most easily justifiable when there is a known shortage of labour in local industries, and when close contact is maintained with employers to make sure that the training that the school is providing is up-to-date. This, however, implies flexibility, and it is very difficult for a school to be flexible. In this area in particular, we are talking about

highly specialized competence in the instructional staff, and about an expensive investment in specialized equipment. The ordinary administrative difficulties of projecting enrolments, obtaining staffing authority and securing funding for supplies are immensely increased in the vocational sector, and a change to bring school programs into line with a change in the kinds of work that are available in the local situation may be an administrative impossibility.

There is considerable sadness in the contemplation of some of the white elephants left behind by that delirious period when the coffers of Ottawa were opened for the benefit of vocational education, first through the national technical and vocational training program and then in the name of regional economic expansion. The caprices of federal financial management added curious cosmetic touches to these monuments, which stand now as eloquent reminders of the crudity of Canadian politics. One school district was practically compelled to spend fifty percent more than its estimate of needs in outfitting its schools in the first phase of their development, only to find that in the second phase its budget was cut to two-thirds of estimated minimum requirements. In another district, a regional school has reached its peak enrolment at 60% of capacity. It will never be able to afford the staff needed to offer the technical and vocational options for which it is equipped, and in any case some of them would never be wanted. It is well equipped, for instance, for courses in quantity cooking: but in that rural countryside there is no demand for that skill, nor is there, within a hundred mile radius, a restaurant that possesses the kind of equipment that the students would be learning to use.

The sight of students expertly manipulating steam presses or turning photographs into usable offset printing plates produces mixed feelings. Some few of them will, no doubt, find work in those trades. For the rest, there is obvious value in the self-esteem acquired in doing a job well, with a visible outcome -- the same kind of value, I suppose, that the conservative professes to find in an algebra exercise. And there is a lot of evidence that success in learning how to do things, with a tangible result, has a good effect on attitudes towards learning generally. It is impossible, though, not to wonder whether these good effects could not be achieved by some means that did not call for so much expensive hardware.

For the student who cannot be convinced of the value of a range of academic rudiments, because he or she does not aspire to the further studies that might give them some meaning, and who on the other hand is not looking for specific job training, what does the school offer that is of benefit? For that matter, what does the high school offer to ensure that all those who go out from it, whatever their destination, have received an education appropriate to the needs of the young citizen of the seventies?

The answer for the most part, has to be: not very much. The middle ground between academic rudiments on the one hand, and, on the other, "vocational" rudiments that in themselves are of equally doubtful value, is still pretty bare.

It would be wrong, of course, to look at this as a question quite distinct from the problems of academic or vocational schooling. It isn't. We're talking now about the interpretation of the environment of the student, the development of a view of himself or herself and of the patterns of society and the natural world; about self image and world view; about life skills and survival capabilities; about goals, values and attitudes. These are things that the student is always learning something about, from one source or another, often subliminally, often enthusiastically, often mistakenly and often without any adult guidance. And what is learned shows up in attitudes towards, and performance in, academic and vocational schooling.

"Motivation," says teacher after teacher, "is the biggest problem." "Attitudes have changed," said a vice-principal, "and the biggest change seems to have been brought in with that third of the school population that's here because there's no place else to go. They don't seem to feel any joy in discovery, any pride in achievement. They won't accept any automatic authority. Self-discipline is something they don't even consider, still less develop -- they don't see any reason for it. And parents shrug off responsibility. They won't make any commitment on behalf of the kids."

"The biggest difficulty," a vocational teacher complained, "is that deliberate non-workers are doing so well outside. Unemployment insurance rip-offs, undeclared moonlighting, tax dodging ... If you want a garage built, I can take you to a young fellow who quit his job with a construction firm six months ago. He hasn't worked less than eight hours in a day since then, takes all his payments in cash, and draws unemployment insurance. At least he's working. The worst problem is those who won't work -- a year or two out of school, and they come back and hang around the kids here, pushing joints. They've learned how to beat the system, and that's feeding back into the school. What do you think that does to motivation?"

"This is a port city," mused a principal. "The traffic through the harbour is its life-blood, and its identity has grown from its function. The kids don't seem to have any awareness of any of that. It never occurs to them to wonder where the ships come from, or why. I asked one lad the other day if he knew how to tell what country a ship belonged to. He looked vaguely at the docks down there and said he guessed they were all Canadian, because they were flying Canadian flags. Can people develop any sense of their own country, their culture or their collective interests when they are so blind to their environment?"

These comments are reminders that the major sources of knowledge and information and the major influences affecting the attitudes and ethics of young people are no longer within the school. They are reminders, at the same time, that very few parents now play, or are able to play, any significant part in deciding what information shall be presented to their children.

The assumption of the academic tradition, that the prime function of the school was to dispense knowledge to those who would otherwise be ignorant, and that the content of that knowledge and the manner of its presentation could be so regulated as to reinforce the moral education being given to the child in the home, simply does not hold water any longer. The crying need now is for a mode of education which will teach people how to cope with the mass of information and suggestions which assails them daily, how to establish a stable base of identity, how to recognize their own long-term advantage and their obligations to others, how to form rational and morally defensible goals, and how to select, obtain and use the knowledge and skills they need to pursue those goals and defend their interests.

Many, many attempts are being made to develop courses that serve these purposes, whether by adapting and extending the scope of existing programs of English literature or social studies, by creating new interdisciplinary programs, or by bringing in courses in the rudiments of the younger disciplines of the human sciences -- psychology, anthropology, sociology and so on.

The most serious obstacle to success in this kind of reform is the second of the characteristics mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: the high school's habit of evaluating its clients.

The justification for bringing these new courses into the school is that they contribute to the ability of people to survive and prosper. The goal is to encourage everyone to learn as much as they can in whatever way they can. To learn a little is better than to learn nothing. The same is true for practical courses like family life education, consumer education and financial management. Questions of ranking and selection are not only meaningless but counter-productive.

This disturbs many adults, who want to see nothing in the school program that cannot be used as a means of grading students and differentiating between them. It disturbs many teachers – because many teachers still feel that their authority depends on the right to judge and evaluate "work", and "work", by definition, is an activity in which people are reluctantly compelled to engage. (There is a curious and very human paradox in this. Most teachers are happy when their students like their subject; but they tend to feel a little guilty about it unless they

can persuade themselves that the subject-matter is inherently unattractive, even daunting, and that the students have come to like it only because of their respect for good teaching.) It also disturbs many students, who are conditioned to expect evaluation of their "performance" or "progress" in everything they undertake at school, and see little point in committing their time and energy to anything that they will not get credit for.

The result, too often, is a course that is designed to interest, stimulate and inform all those who take it, but which is offered as an elective or optional subject, apparently in competition with those in which grading and ranking are prime objectives. It therefore appears to many adults outside the school, and to some students and teachers, to be simply an easy option, a way to get credit without effort.

It is ironical that the academic and evaluative traditions of the high school are so strong that these tentative efforts to develop programs that are truly educational, not merely instructive, truly formative and supportive instead of formalistic and antagonistic, are coming under violent attack and seem, at present, likely to be driven out of the schools in most jurisdictions.

Many educators fear that the reactionary backlash that the schools are experiencing at present will not stop at the elimination of those programs which teach personal and social competence and the understanding of the changing demands and pressures of the environment. Equally vulnerable are the arts -- pictorial, plastic, dramatic and musical. These activities, in which the level of teaching is particularly good, are for many students the things that make school worth while, but because of the shamefully low esteem in which they are held in Canadian society they are widely regarded as "frills". Again, it is ironical to note that those educational efforts that are closest to the purposes of self-discovery and cultural development, and which relate to those matters by which we judge the quality of life and the moral worth of past societies, are the first to be abandoned in a time of retrenchment. "It seems," commented one teacher morosely, "that when the politicians decide that it's time to cut back on education the first things to go are the things that make kids glad to come to school."

In spite of all that has been said in recent years about the importance of community involvement, there is little sign that high schools have moved much closer to their communities in the last decade. Occasional examples can be found where resource persons have been identified and are regularly used as guest lecturers or as discussants in seminars, and many city schools make good use of cultural institutions of various kinds. There are experiments, too, in shared facilities -- a library, for example, available to the public as well as to the students. For the most

part, though, the secondary school appears to be a very separate institution, seldom making much concession in its programs to the nature (socio-economic or cultural) of the community. Even the presence of very strong ethnic characteristics in the community rarely seems to offer a basis for educational programming, perhaps because locally-initiated programs and teacher-designed curriculum are still in an early stage of development.

Improvement in sensitivity and responsiveness to local conditions and community traditions would undoubtedly pay off in better student motivation and educational effectiveness. It does not, however, seem likely to happen. The pressures of present financial policies in most of the provinces are threatening to increase teacher load to the point where it will be difficult for the teacher to give any serious thought to effective techniques for teaching even a standarized curriculum, and quite impossible to find time for the development of appropriate local variations. Besides, very few teachers have the training needed for creating imaginative and effective curriculum. This, of course, is one of the major reasons why (as earlier mentioned) the tendency to cast all program in the "talk-about, write-about" mould remains so strong.

In many places, the centralization of secondary schooling in recent years in big regional high schools has cut the school off even more completely from the parents and the adults of the community. Adolescents live their daily lives in their own city, infinitely remote from the home.

The effect of this on the upbringing of young people, and on the roles played by various actors in their lives, is not yet clear. It seems inevitable, though, that the influence of the home must be greatly weakened, especially in those matters of behaviour which are of so much importance to the adolescent. The removal of teen-agers, for most of their working hours, to a school many miles distant from their home, there to spend the day with many hundreds of their peers, virtually unobserved as individuals by known adults, makes it practically impossible for the home or the adult community to influence behaviour relating to drugs, alcohol or sex. It would seem that in such a situation the development of a good student-teacher relationship, of a concept of teaching which goes far beyond mere instruction, and of administrative arrangements that keep the student in touch with (and as far as possible in the sight of) a responsible adult, are matters of the utmost importance.

In that kind of situation, where impersonality and routine and sheer size offer a real danger of dehumanization, the current pressure to eliminate interpretive and cultural subjects, and to establish teaching conditions that prohibit inventiveness and destroy the possibility of humane responsiveness, represents a particularly grievous threat to the quality of education.

A fact that Canadians must admit – however reluctantly – is that the major social trends which operate throughout Canada are the same as those which operate in the United States. This is not to say that the particular social phenomena which tend to occur across Canada are the same as those which tend to occur in the United States. They are not, and there are all kinds of historical, economic and demographic reasons for the difference. Many mistakes have been made in educational development because the difference was not recognized. Ideas which developed in response to the particular social conditions of the American supercities were wrongly assumed to be valid in the Canadian context. But we do live within the continental culture of North America, and it is important to recognize those constraints and those tendencies which cannot be radically changed within our own bailiwick -- cannot, in fact, be changed by any means short of opting out of the North American community.

For instance: the following comments made about American schools in a recent issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan* are entirely applicable to Canadian high schools:

> "Several years ago John Fischer, president of Teachers College, Columbia ... observed that change had been more an illusion than a reality. The 'atmosphere' of schools had changed, he said – the schools *seemed* different. 'But the institutional character of schools – their problems, forms and functions -- look in 1970 much as they did in 1960.' ... Essentially the same is true today. School purposes, forms and functions are not substantially different in 1976 from what they were in 1970 ..."*

Summing up a very shrewd analysis of the different degrees of possibility attaching to different *kinds* of change, the author observes that "serious redesign of the schools is ... an uphill proposition whose possibilities are related inversely to its importance."

The biggest change in the atmosphere of the high school in the last decade has been the movement towards voluntarism – away from structured, prescribed course patterns, stern discipline, regulation of behaviour, dress and manners, and compulsory attendance throughout the school day, and towards open choice and self-determination. Philosophically this is fine. It would be nice to be convinced that it shows an increasing recognition of human dignity and individual rights in a democratic society. To be fair, it must be said that there are many schools where that is indeed the spirit in which these less prescriptive modes of operation are being applied. It must also be said that the most vociferous objections to this tendency are often the expression of a political philosophy to which, in other

* *Stevens, L. B. The Paradox of School Reform. Phi Delta Kappan, February 1976*

chapters of this present study, I have taken strong exception. One does have to wonder, though, whether in the overall picture this easing of control does not reflect a loss of confidence in the general purposes of schooling rather than a positive commitment to a new and more generous philosophy. One has to wonder whether it is possible to allow a wide range of free choice and at the same time to make sure that people do learn, effectively and reliably, what they need to know to cope with the realities of adult life; and one has to wonder how often the easing of restrictions is accompanied by training in decision-making, by counselling for knowledgeable choice, and by ordered planning to ensure the progressive transfer of responsibility to students as and when they become able to accept it.

As soon as the effort of change switches from atmosphere to substance, the slope of the "uphill proposition" grows abruptly steeper. The idea of locally developed courses is in itself excellent, and is even more commendable (philosophically at least) when students and teachers work together to create them. But what are they to replace in the school program? What happens if their creation was due to the presence of a teacher with special skills, experience or interests who may not be there in a couple of years' time? How are the financing needs of a unique local program to be balanced against the costs of maintaining standard programs in the system generally? If one local idea seems to work out well, should an attempt be made to disseminate it, to make it general in the school system, or should schools be encouraged, rather, to have their own separate good ideas?

Innovation not only in method, not only in the content of courses, but in the purpose of teaching and the evaluation of its outcome, must be strongly supported *if* a change in the "institutional character" of schools is intended. It is rare, however, to find a jurisdiction in which the prospect of a change in the institutional character of schools provokes anything but alarm. Plagued by the kind of questions referred to above, and aware of the difficulty of terminating an experiment once the interest of any significant group of people has been engaged ("There is no such thing," stated one superintendent flatly, "as a pilot project"), administrators move with caution. Every new commitment, after all, means a further loss of budgetary flexibility. Today's bright new notion may be tomorrow's sacred cow.

So there are a lot of frustrated teachers around, and a lot who make do with changes of style and decor. There a lot of frustrated administrators, too, who recognize good ideas but cannot or dare not promote them – cannot because so few school districts really have any policy in regard to innovation, or dare not because of the attitudes of their boards.

Anyone looking for proof that the voice of the people is the voice of God, or even looking for heartening evidence of the health and merit of representative democracy, should stay away from school boards.

I know that to say that is to be unfair to a very large number of thoughtful, conscientious, knowledgeable and energetic trustees. But a depressingly large number of school board members are none of these things. Good trustees are often just as frustrated as good administrators (and that means much more frustrated than some teachers realize). School boards are heavily infiltrated with axe-grinders, obsessive devotees of special interests, extremists of every political hue, ego-trippers, self-important nonentities, unimportant celebrities, and people who would really rather be Prime Minister of Canada but could win no other election than that which commonly returns trustees whose surnames fall between A and K. School board elections are not the most brilliant jewel in the crown of Canadian democracy. We should be thankful, I suppose, that there are so many trustees elected who care about education, and that some of them also know something about it; but the frequency with which the other kind shows up seems to have increased as districts get bigger and more centralized. Their presence makes it very difficult to maintain the sense of shared commitment that should link teacher and trustee – the two adults who, next to the parents, bear the heaviest responsibility for the upbringing of children. Board meetings seem to grow steadily longer, more frequent and less fruitful, and their retardant effect on educational improvement increases inexorably.

The persistence of old perceptions and old expectations, and the continuous invention of new administrative obstacles, make deep change very difficult. The wheel of change has turned through half a revolution, but seems to have jammed at that point. As a result, the high school continues to be a strong instrument for confirming the effects of family background on people's future prospects, and reinforcing the effects of their peer group upon their attitudes. As a means of deliberate, substantial change for the better in people's lives, it presents less cause for satisfaction.

III. THE TEACHER, THE STUDENT, THE SCHOOL

In contrast to the impression often given by magazine articles, books and convention speakers, the schools of Canada are full of good teachers.

To say that, of course, is to provoke argument about the meaning of "good". One of the first requirements in any school situation is to narrow the gap between the teachers' and the students' understanding of the word. That implies narrowing the gap between the different ways in which students and teachers look at education.

Teachers tend – as they must – to take the long and broad view, seeing the differing personalities of students as a series of variations around a common theme, and trying to maintain a long-term fidelity to the values of a particular discipline, through the vicissitudes of changing fashions and varying preference. They are also aware of the dimension of time, and of the fact that adolescence brings such swift changes that Johnnie this year may be a completely different person from Johnnie a year ago, or Johnnie next year. The result, often, is a tendency to treat the student's passions of the movement with a certain disdain. That can be exasperating to the student.

Students, equally naturally, are preoccupied with their own growth and their immediate, short-term perceptions. They have forgotten last year's Johnnie and do not yet know next year's. Their "short-sighted" pragmatism can be irksome to the teacher.

This needs to be qualified. Both teacher and student are concerned with short-term and long-range goals; but their perspectives are dangerously different. Teachers, as adults, see students following a long course of personal development through adolescence to maturity, a course in which the profile of growth should also be a path of convergence towards the realities and responsibilities of adult life. Taking the long view, they want to guide each stage of growth and learning so that it provides a sound preparation for the next. They stand in the adult world, looking back, and from that viewpoint they try to design a path that will lead the student to where they are.

Confusions begin at this point. Teachers' own dispositions vary widely. Some are concerned with the contribution of their own discipline (history or geography, mathematics or biology) to the long-term development of a better quality of life, and the consequent need of society for people who comprehend and respect that contribution and can carry it further; so they want to set up a program of pro-

gressive learning that would lead in the end to the production of specialists in the discipline. But that is decidedly an adult view, and an educated view, often with an academic and theoretical bias.

Lacking the perspective of the adult, and incapable of comprehending or sharing the adult viewpoint, students may see such a program as a series of highly artificial and inexplicable ordeals, to be evaded if possible or performed with minimum effort for maximum credit.

Other teachers may be concerned with bringing students safely through the turmoil of adolescence to an adult state of emotional stability, objectivity and a rational balance of values. The student, in the grip of strong emotions and the passionate excitements of adolescence, can hardly be expected to share a point of view of which he or she is not yet capable – still less to accept that his or her present state of feeling is "wrong". In a strong emotional state, we seek activities and experience that will satisfy the emotional drive, and nothing is less satisfactory to us than to have someone say, "You don't have to try that: I can tell you how it comes out." The recital of someone else's dreams, someone else's visit to a movie, or someone else's explorations, is a poor substitute for dreaming, seeing a film or exploring. In the same way, a course in English literature which a teacher sees as a fine program of vicarious experience, offering wise and succinct insight and instructive analogy and promoting a mature equilibrium, may mean very little to the student who has not yet lived his own instances of the experiences which are so shrewdly generalized in the books, nor acquired an adult interest in constructing a personal philosophy. For him or her, the burning question and the immediate motivator of action is likely to be "Who and what am I, *now?* ", rather than "What will all my acts add up to? " or "Where do I stand in relation to human society? "

Similar difficulties arise with regard to education in health, in the management of family life, in consumer economics and in the various practical aspects of competent living. Problems of a kind that the student has never encountered do not seem real, and their examination tends to be seen as an academic exercise in which the object is to find the "right" answer. Courses designed by adults, in retrospect, with hindsight, just don't look the same from the beginner's end.

The teacher wants to teach. The sense of obligation to relate everything to the long view and the broad picture, the powerful influence of his or her own training in analysis, synthesis and orderly presentation, and the weight of his or her own commitment to the values of academic objectivity, may add up to a strong feeling that the student's limited range of vision has to be countered by imposing the adult view through actual dominance. In practice, this leads to the feeling that "teaching" is taking place only when information, ordered in an adult perspec-

tive, is being imparted, and careful measures applied to discover how much has been retained. If the teacher is not very careful, "teaching" will come to seem more important than learning, and the situation may quickly deteriorate into academic artificiality. Since the students are predisposed to regard the whole apparatus of school as artificial anyway, they will readily go along with this, and a permanent gap is created between the perceptions of the two sides.

Pressed to take the long view, the student is in fact being asked to look ahead, and to do so through eyes that he or she does not yet possess, in the perspective of a set of values that belong to an identity that has not yet formed.

There is only one way he or she can respond. The adult world is seen primarily, by the adolescent, as a world of work, for entry into which it will be necessary to display credentials. The overwhelming majority of students, asked what they expect the school to do for their future lives, will answer in terms of preparation for a career; and if they have not yet formed ideas about a career, they will be at a loss for an answer. Without guidance, adolescents will attach very low importance to courses they do not see as leading to vocational credentials.

In brief, then: the teacher's "long view" stresses the development of the student's personality and capabilities in the perspective of what the teacher knows about human growth and the social context; and in the short term the teachers concern is to devise episodes of learning which fit into those larger perspectives. The student's "long view" is an attempt to identify (not necessarily understand) the track which he or she must follow to be admitted to the remote world of work, with which are equated financial independence and freedom from adult constraints; and the short term concern is simply with this year's hurdles. Those who see no clear avenue to a career or to the working world can find little point in most school programs, and tend to be disruptive.

This, obviously, is only the beginning of the analysis. To be useful it must be pressed further.

"The teacher" is an abstraction. The reality is, for the student, a recurring series of encounters with a number of teachers, each having his or her own convictions, goals and strategies. They are all trying to haul the young person through to maturity (all, that is, except the unhappy few who seek their comfort and sense of status in the feeling of adult dominance, and therefore try to keep the student in permanent subjection), but they do not all define their specific goals in the same manner.

As for the student; change the tense of the question, recognize that no one who does not have a substantial past is comfortable with a question about the future, and you get different answers. Asked "What have you *got* out of being at school, and what would you have liked to get out of it but haven't? " students really open up. "Learning to get along with people" is the dominant theme.

Sometimes the change of tense has a dramatic effect. One pair of grade eleven students, highly intelligent and working successfully through a rigidly academic program, could say nothing about their future aspirations except "some kind of college degree that will qualify me for working with people". When the question was shifted to the present and the past, they looked startled, then pensive. After a moment, one of them volunteered, "Fifty percent of it is passing courses – but no more than fifty percent. The rest is finding out who you really are, and learning how to relate to other people." The other agreed. "You could pass your exams by staying at home with books, but you wouldn't be much use to yourself or anybody else afterwards."

Invited to be retrospective, students often move far from the vocational concerns that seem to preoccupy them when they look ahead. "I wish," said a recent graduate, "that the school had found a way to prepare me to handle my emotional reactions to the things I discovered about life. When I stopped being a child, and began to see my parents as people and to find out about their world and their lives, I had a hard time, and I felt cheated because school hadn't prepared me for any of that."

"I don't feel ready for grown-up life," said a non-academic student in final year. "When I see my friends running into trouble – marriage coming apart because of all the problems and practical difficulties that take the shine off things – I want to know why can't we learn about those things before they hit us. Can't they teach us to be ready for them? "

"You know what was best? " asked a girl two years out of school. "It was the field trips, when they showed us what it was really like. Like, they took us to a clothing factory, and we learned a lot about how you can waste your money, and what to look for. Like, I don't have too much money – I'm a sales clerk – but we had this real good Home Ec teacher, and I can tell my friends a lot about buying the right food and how you can switch a few clothes around, if you know about colours and that, and really have a lot of outfits. Things like not knowing how to make your money last, or what sort of things you can do in your spare time, or what it's like doing different kinds of jobs – that can really make you unhappy. We could have gone to lots more places, you know – like a lot of the kids had cars, or could have borrowed their parents' cars . . . "

You listen to that kind of thing, and you look at the efforts of teachers to set up coherent programs according to their different view-points, and you wonder how it can all be pulled together.

Then you ask the kids: "What makes a good teacher? "

The response is pretty unanimous: "Must be somebody who really likes kids". " Should want to know the kids as people, separate people, not just as a class," "Should be willing to listen to our point of view." From dozens of conversations, three points come out strongly. The teacher must communicate with candour and honesty, must be open to candid and honest communication from the student, and must give firm and consistent guidance.

Even for the boy or girl from a quiet, secure home, the teacher is a surrogate parent. Parents are not usually good communicators to their own children about the adult world, nor good listeners about the world of the adolescent. Communication is impeded on both sides by relationship, emotion, remembered attitudes and present roles. The parent is an adult seen at too close range for comfortable observation, and too much a part of one's own self for confident questioning. The teacher is an adult who can be interrogated, challenged – and confided in (the "good" teacher, that is). But he or she must remain an adult; and for most kids that means calmness and firmness.

When communication is good, honest and continuous, the teacher can do a lot, within and around the curriculum, to ensure that the kind of necessary progression he has built into his course does take place and does take on meaning for the students; and also give the whole experience of schooling more value for young people who are growing up. The more opportunity there is for open to-and-fro communication, the better the chances are that the teacher and student will end up working towards the same goals. Poor communication almost guarantees crossed purposes and mutual frustration.

Student-teacher rapport, therefore, becomes a top priority. "More so than ever before," declares one teacher. "Eighty percent of the kids are more critical, more curious and more honest than ever before. If they think something is useless, they say so. Sometimes they're right, sometimes they're wrong, but either way you have to respect their right to a sensible answer. And you have to remember that you are the adult and they are the kids. You are the one with the obligation to be responsible: it's up to you to establish the kind of relationship that will ensure that they are really being honest, not just silly, and that they will respect your answer, think about it, and enlarge their perspectives as a result."

Students expect the teacher to have expectations of them. If the rapport is good, they want those expectations to be reasonably high – and consistent. "The first year was really bad," said a student in an open climate school. "Most of the teachers had come from pretty strict schools, and had transferred because they wanted a situation where they could give the kids more freedom and more responsibility. But they were just too easy on us. You have to have somebody expecting a lot of you before you can learn to expect a lot of yourself, learn to set your own targets high enough."

Teachers echo that sentiment. "It's all too easy," said one, "to get on the downward escalator. A kid performs badly, so you ease up on your demands. So he eases up on the effort, and so it goes on."

Rapport, communication, mutual trust, build up a contractual relationship whether formalized or not. Since it is the essence of a good teaching-learning situation, it is probably a good thing to formalize it whenever the structure of the curriculum and the school setting make it possible – but not to make it too inflexible for reasonable adjustments. Kids are human, and fall off their good resolutions. It's important that they know that their lapse is observed, that they receive rebuke for it – and that they then get a chance to climb back on. "I make deals all the time," said the principal of a school working on a semi-open basis. But his "deals" rest on one simple, clear schedule, consistently applied and made known in a terse written notice to students and their parents. Five unexplained absences from a course the student has contracted for mean a warning to the parents. Eight mean an interview with student and parents. At ten, the student is excluded from the course. Serious misconduct entails a three-day suspension, followed by return to school, with the parents, to negotiate a fresh contract.

That works well in this particular community. Not much of it would apply where parents are absent or indifferent and the student has been raised in the expectation of defeat: but in those cases rapport, communication and mutual trust become even more important.

Fourteen-year-old Linda was being interviewed by the vice-principal. Like almost half of her fellow-students, she came from a single-parent home, where life was violent, brutish and nasty. She had run away from home for the third time, been caught and brought back for the third time. Her style was total defiance. ("My mother's upset? That's not my problem: it's her problem for catching me.") His was a calm, polite and gentle firmness, and the interview renewed a tenuous, undeclared but real contractual relationship between them. Linda may well end up re-enacting her mother's miseries. If she doesn't, it will be because of a frail bond of trust that she found in the school and nowhere else in the adult world, and which alone may lead her to some understanding of her long-term needs.

Not everybody finds that rapport. "In junior secondary we really test teachers," a group of students told me. "If they get mad or yell at us or lecture us they won't get anywhere. But if they can take it with a smile and talk to us like real people, and still let us know that there are limits to what they'll put up with, then we all kind of settle down."

It's not any easy prescription, and sometimes the best that it achieves is a kind of precarious dominance. The traditional classroom situation, in fact, makes it difficult to achieve anything else. It polarizes the roles of teacher and student, creating a kind of confrontation that is almost an invitation to conflict.

A lot of schools are trying to reduce the polarization by having every student enrolled in a group of students who will be attached to one teacher (acting in the role of "adviser") for as much as possible of their school career. Inclusion of principals, vice-principals, counsellors and non-classroom staff is one of the ways in which some schools reduce the size of these student groups. For the system to work as a basis for development of mutual trust, though, there have to be regular meetings built into the time-table, and they have to be used genuinely as discussion and trouble-shooting meetings. When they work, they work well. A group that has really gelled can provide just the right setting for discussion not only of group projects and activities (some schools use these groups as the basis for structuring field trips, camping expeditions and informal team games) but even of quite delicate matters – attendance and behaviour problems, for instance.

It is impressive to see how students and teachers respond once the beginnings of rapport are established. In one school, teachers have involved their own families in wilderness trips with students. "It breaks all kinds of barriers," one teacher remarked. "Just having to share a hut with other kids who weren't buddies beforehand, and learn to get along and share the chores, is a whole new experience for some students." Getting along with others, and a chance for teachers and students to know each other as persons – the main themes of students' comments on the school – really are important, carry over into every facet of school life, and are quite shockingly difficult to provide for. In the example quoted, the investment of time that the teachers are making is far beyond what could reasonably be demanded as part of the job.

Time and numbers are the most powerful enemies of education, because they translate into money, and the schools are surrounded by inquisitors who cry "Waste! " as soon as they see signs of expenditure on anything that cannot easily be identified as instruction in one of the traditional disciplines.

Time and numbers still confine most schools to the teacher-in-front-of-the-class situation, with its inevitable consequences of lessons aimed at the average,

questions reduced to lowest common denominator, lack of understanding of respective viewpoints, and a substantial minority getting by comfortably on minimum effort, hiding their non-participation in the shelter of the crowd, or sitting in a state of mystification that they can't even explain. "I don't understand what it is that I don't understand," said a dejected student, "so how can I ask a question? "

The fact is that it is very hard to escape from the question-and-answer procedure in most school settings, and even harder for the teacher to find time to plan anything other than a tell-and-ask presentation. This is especially true in schools operating on the semester plan, which tends to increase the number of courses each teacher is responsible for in the course of a year. In a class of any size, moreover, the questions have to be related to the objectivity of the lesson, not the subjectivity of the student – a guarantee that they will stimulate the minimum of mental effort and student involvement.

There is an inescapable equation here. A one-to-one relationship makes it possible to open up doubt, curiosity and the possibility of genuine understanding by finding the questions that are real to the student. That is when learning begins. The only reliable motivation is perceived self-interest, and that depends for its force as well as for its form upon the emotional disposition, state of mind and personality of the individual. People will learn for profit or for fun, and both terms are highly subjective. The further you go from a one-to-one situation, the more impossible it becomes to tailor the lesson and the question to the individual's perceptions of profit or fun, and the more inevitable it becomes that questions will be of the all-purpose, objective variety – cruising wasps watched by the student with apprehensive defensiveness, ignored with relief if they alight on someone else, batted down as quickly as possible if they pick you to land on.

Questions beginning with "why" or "what if" are the best way of setting thinking in motion, but if they do that successfully they provoke challenging answers of a highly individual kind. That being so, they can seldom be asked honestly by the teacher in a "class" situation, where individuality is a time-consuming disruption. If raised by a student, they are alarming to a teacher who is unsure of his or her status. Even more alarming is the question "so what? ". Students in a large group quickly learn the uselessness of probing, except as a deliberate disruptive tactic. They learn to guess at the kind of arbitrary, closed-end answers that are wanted (the only kind acceptable if the teacher is to maintain the artificial unity of the class and cope with the pressure of time and numbers), and to keep their own real questions to themselves. They would rather be bored than frustrated.

This means, of course, that genuine, challenging, satisfying activity is rarely a possibility for the student in a large class. For as much as three quarters of the

school day, a student who wants to work may find that the opportunity to do so is denied, and only a spectator role (often at very dull spectacle) permitted.

The bigger the class, the less real its functional unity, and the more deadening the effects of its imposed, fictitious unity. The heavier the overall pressure of time and numbers on the teacher, the poorer the chances are that he or she will be able to devise ways of overccming that and giving the kids a chance to be active.

A point of focus on the blackboard and a sustained commentary are excellent ways of inducing hypnosis. Indeed, unless the teacher has exceptional histrionic talent, sustained lecturing will be seen by students as a challenge to remain untaught. But circumstances too often force teachers into these styles. And some, it must be admitted, eventually make a vice of that necessity. One does encounter teachers who perceive as a "discussion" a performance that the student sees as a monologue, or who, like nagging spouses, feel that when they have had their say without contestation the conversation has been a success.

Lesson-centred objectivity, as opposed to student-centred exploration, is the vice of the high school, the source of its worst inefficiencies, and the almost inevitable consequence of excessive pressure of time and numbers. It tends to be part of a pattern of alienation between the institution and the students, and to be accompanied by a low trust level, discipline problems, and a limited knowledge by the teachers of their students and their backgrounds.

Unreality of assignments is a common consequence. Study assignments handed out to students too often reflect some publisher's optimistic idea of the cultural furnishings of the Middle American home rather than a real awareness of the resources which the school itself offers, and still less of the reality of whatever resources might be available in the community. There are, of course, some striking and excellent exceptions; but too often the marks awarded for "projects" are an evaluation of the home and the parents – a test of the reference books they possess and the periodicals they subscribe to. For many students there is cruel embarrassment in being held responsible for parents and the conditions of the home. The only weapons against that kind of embarrasment are deceit and defiance.

To require nothing of a student, on the other hand, or to give him nothing to do, is unforgivable: yet it happens, all too often, in the impersonality of the overcrowded classroom. It is the ultimate victory that the student may often seem to seek but never really wants to win. The more uncertain or tormenting the circumstances of the home, in fact, the more necessary it is that the teacher be seen as someone who has fair, reasonable, good-humoured and consistent expectations of

the student as an individual person. A situation which leaves the student asking "What is expected of me? What am I here for? " is counter-educative. One that gives him the answer "Nothing! " is soul-destroying.

Sentimentality and non-interventionist attitudes on the part of teachers, too, amount to a grievous betrayal of students. Order is necessary for learning, and must be provided by the teacher. Clarity in distinguishing the roles of teacher and student in the learning process is essential for the maintenance of that order, though distasteful to some teachers. Moreover, that distinction has to be made in terms of the student's perceptions, *not those of the teacher*. To impose the teacher's philosophy is silly, arrogant and cruel. Some students are very successful, because of their own maturity and the cultural orientation of a middle-class upbringing, in constructing their own framework of order in a "free" or "open-climate" school. They are the first to say "This is great, but it's not for everybody". It is cruel to thrust kids into a wide open situation before they are capable of constructing their own discipline. Those who need the support of clear, reasonable and definite expectations, and a firm guidance from a concerned adult, may be frustrated and alienated by misguided leniency.

Every learning situation has a natural, organic structure, given to it on the one hand by the nature of the learning resources being used (books, microscopes, museums, theatre, guest lecturer or whatever) and on the other hand by the needs and perceptions and state of readiness of the student. The discipline of an appropriate procedure, and a clear – a very clear – set of demands upon the learner, are necessary for the security of the student. The three major enemies of effective structure are the artificial constraints of time, the burden of numbers, and the anarchy provoked by fuzzy-minded teachers. (In justice, it must be underlined that fuzziness is often the result of lack of time and opportunity to think, plan, discuss and prepare.) As remarked above, though, schools are too often trapped in the question-and-answer convention, and students are often indoctrinated in this to such a point that an open-ended experiential situation (experimenting with various art media, watching or taking part in plays, listening to music or poetry, touring an exhibition) is not seen as "learning" unless followed up by interrogation.

One further element in the creation of attitudes in the school has been given too little attention. That is the effect on students of the nature of the school as a building.

Schools tend to be modelled, physically, on some familiar and revered social institution – temple, factory, office or, in recent years, the open-plan suburban home of the corporation executive; or, more recently still, the idealized street. At first sight, it seems wrong that school design should be derived from other institu-

tions. The uniqueness of the institution of schooling should be reflected in uniqueness of building design. Certainly, there is a link between the sense of mood and purpose in a school and the kind of mood that the building induces. Churchill once remarked "We shape our buildings, and then they shape us." Openness, regularity, uncrowded floor space, light, and the provision of some areas that offer privacy in the centre of the crowd rather than a sense of remoteness and isolation, seem to make for a better mood than the sprawling labyrinth that is more typical. Narrow halls seem to build hostility and tension; shabbiness and a straggling disorder of design invite rough treatment, litter, casual destructiveness, and a general relaxation of self-discipline.

In some schools, students have been invited to design and carry out elaborate decorating projects in halls and washrooms. When this is done in a genuine way, with prior study of pop art techniques and a free rein then given to the student teams, the results can be a pleasing kind of revelation. In one school at least, it brought an almost complete end to a long-standing problem of defacement of wall surfaces. It has to be done over again at least once in every five years, though. Students seem to respect the efforts of those they see as their own peers, but "generations" don't last long these days, and, as earlier remarked, the student's awareness is dominated by the immediate, the "now".

And that brings us back to our first point.

The student's view focuses on the short-term. His or her attempt at long-range planning will inevitably be arbitrary, ill-informed and highly artificial, since it is an attempt to peer ahead into an unknown and uncomprehended world. Moreover, the images with which we adults communicate with each other about that world are highly selective, highly dependent for their meaning on allusion to our own past experience, and heavy with references to our own values and conventions. These are the images that constantly and stridently assail the adolescent's consciousness through the mass media. Little wonder that they are often baffling, confusing or frightening, and deter many young people from serious contemplation of their future.

The teacher's view is long-term. Teachers are very much concerned with the growth of their student towards emotional and intellectual maturity, and use their own hindsight to perceive (or imagine) a continuous track, a learning sequence, where the student may see only a series of separate episodes. The cumulative value that the teacher believes those episodes to have for the student may be quite unlike the immediate value which they seem to have, separately, in the student's perceptions.

Communication has to draw these different perceptions together. Curriculum design, responsive to the messages received from the student, must, *for each student,* set the particular and immediate within an emerging perspective of long-term development. Teaching approaches must rest on trustful communication, so that each student, *in his or her own way* , can borrow from the experience and maturity of the teacher to sort out and assess the stream of messages being received from the adult world. Counselling (ideally a function of the teacher adviser, with professional back-up and advice available, and guidance on appropriate referral also available as a last-resort service) should be a matter of continuous, informal communication, aimed at helping students to live with themselves, to develop the strength to cope, to progress towards knowledgeable choice (for choice is meaningless unless it is knowledgeable) and eventually to come to see the overall pattern of their education within the perspective of their own unfolding lives.

The real responsibility of the good teacher is to make sure that everything that his or her students undertake is an enlargement of their own lives, rather than just the satisfaction of a narrow academic requirement. Schooling is not education unless it draws the students beyond their apparent limits, out of the narrowness of their youthful perspectives. That is an enormous undertaking. To translate it from platitude into reality is impossible unless, in the first place, the teacher *knows* the students, understands how they see (and feel about) what goes on in the school, understands the difference between the view from the front of the room and the view from the back, and finds ways of reconciling the various viewpoints by some means other than a blunt and bullying confrontation.

The hindsight of the teacher and the aspirations of the student meet in the school. The encounter can be a mutually distrustful and unproductive stand-off, or it can be a linking of the two in a shared undertaking; or it can be something in between, a genial kind of truce in which both sides go along with the artificial demands of the school. In the first instance, nothing really happens at all, however much apparent activity takes place. In the second, education takes place. In the third, there may be successful schooling, but the education will be incidental. "My first history class," declares a self-styled traditionalist, "had 55 students, and I never had better results." I suspect that those students remember having observed a man of fine personal qualities, because the speaker happens to be the kind of person that young people instinctively look up to. I suspect, too, that that memory has been much more important in their later lives than whatever they were able to recall during the history exam, and the incidental educative effect of the class would have been very much stronger if they had been few enough to know him better.

This is not to suggest that the teacher is there just to be known and revered. What I do mean to suggest is that, even if half of the business of education consists

in providing a sensible program of useful learning, the other half depends on the *effective* presence of a sensitive adult interpreter.

In general, the classroom is warmer, more relaxed and less artificial than it used to be. But too many teachers are still thwarted by conditions that impair communication, rapport and trust. Time and numbers are the principal enemies. Real learning, in the sense of growing understanding of self, of others and of the real world, rather than the mechanical performance of a disjointed series of academic exercises, needs the kind of teacher-student communication that the pressures of time and numbers inhibit.

Anyone therefore who argues that teacher load and the size of the learning group are unimportant has a pitifully and dangerously narrow view of what education is.

IV. IT DEPENDS ON THE POINT OF VIEW

The reality of the school is whatever the student perceives it to be; no more and no less.

To put it crudely, unless we are influencing the student we are doing nothing. What we *mean* to do doesn't matter a damn if it doesn't work. If it doesn't get through to the students and provoke them to make some change in themselves it's not working. On the other hand, if it does get through, and if the change it provokes is not what we wanted, we'd better stop it. Universal schooling requires us to make these judgements for each individual student, according equal importance to each one.

Not everybody buys that. A lot of people are demanding, quite loudly, that the teacher be an enforcer of certain "standards", whether or not the student understands or accepts the need for them. "Don't ask the kids", they say, "tell them. *Make* them work, and fail them if they don't. And make them dress properly, too." Most adults, in fact, will say this if they are asked what they *think* they believe (57% of Americans, according to the seventh annual Gallup Poll on Attitudes towards Education*, and probably a similar proportion of Canadians.) Some, in fact, say it with a glorious disregard for logic. Current educational practice, says a prominent Ottawa businessman, "denies individuals the source of one of life's greatest satisfactions – the joy of meeting a challenge to the best of one's ability. It's realistic, not traumatic, to discover that there are some things we can't handle." He adds, "It is ridiculous to quote statistics that in 1957 fifty per cent of elementary students going on to high school dropped out in Grade 10, when today 85 per cent finish Grade 12. That just provides brownie points for the system, not an education for our children. . . . The majority (of parents) who want their children educated would certainly opt for Grade 8 and 13 entrance examinations to high school and university."

In other words, the majority of parents would like to see their children screened out at Grade 8 by the "joy of discovering" that the school sets up barriers that they can't surmount, in order that the system may be denied brownie points and the children receive an education. Confusing, isn't it?

It is that the good gentleman knows some young people who are heading confidently for Grade 12 diplomas in English, mathematics and science, and resents the fact that others will get a Grade 12 diploma for such "mickey-mouse" options (his terminology) as auto mechanics, theatre arts, health and family life, personal

* *Published in Phi Delta Kappan, December 1975*

well-being, sociology, investments, orienteering, music, graphic arts, ceramics, anthropology, dry cleaning, consumer education or whatever? Is it, in other words, a matter of academic snobbery seeking to preserve distinctions in labelling?

Is it the concern of an employer who wants to see school operate for his greater convenience as a means of stacking people in vertical order, and who looks back nostalgically to an era when there was an unemployed pool of cheap unskilled labour – people not educated above their station?

Or is it the concern of an adult who feels that young people are not deferential enough – and a businessman made nervous by consumerism?

Either way, the sentiments expressed run directly counter to the stated commitment of the Government of Ontario to "help each student to reach his or her own potential, however limited it may be". That, in fact, annoys our good businessman, who argues that "it's taken the minister of education too long to get the message from parents and the business community".

Maybe. But what should we be paying attention to? The strident statements and the public opinion polls? Or the economic, social and human realities, and the unspoken consensus which so often contradicts stated opinion?

It is a complex debate. On the one hand we have the stated desire to impose punitive disciplines and rigorous selection. On another, we have a social economy which insists on a rising level of general schooling. On another (for this is not a two-handed game), we have a humanitarian impulse of unprecedented intensity, strong as a social force generally and very explicit in educational policy in most jurisdictions. Educational policy is not, as a rule, daringly innovative. It tends to reflect the true state of prevailing feeling about educational philosophy – the way people really do feel, over the long haul, even if they do not readily articulate their sentiments – rather than the opinions that people *say* they subscribe to when they are directly interrogated. It makes the kind of distinction, in fact, that business learned years ago to make, between indirect market research and direct consumer interrogation. What people really want is not necessarily what they think they want when they are questioned.

Fairly typical is the declared aim of one school board "to develop capacities of each student and to nurture the will to use them for such objectives as 'respect for one's self and others, physical and emotional well-being, creativity, rational, autonomous decision-making, and constructive, responsible participation as a member of society'". In a similar spirit we find, in a teacher-designed curriculum outline, objectives such as these: "know how to survive economically and be able

to avoid financial pitfalls that may destroy a marriage or impoverish a family. . . . Know that in the world of real work and business, insecurity can crop up in the forms of difficult interviews and people's expectations. . . Analyze the rights of 18-year-olds in our society and also their responsibilities as citizens of a classroom, school and community."

Carried over from content to organization, this orientation appears in a statement adopted by the staff of another school, rejecting the concept of a system in which "all students attempt to pursue the same courses with the same educational objectives, to the same depth, in the same time, irrespective of their varying needs and abilities."

There is, then, a sharp conflict between those who hold that the school should start with concern for students as people, and should try to empower them to defend and advance their individual and collective interest in life, and those who believe that it should be the guardian of the interests of other social institutions, imposing discipline, ranking and rigorous selection upon its clients in accordance with the needs or the convenience of those institutions — domesticating, in the terminology of Paolo Freire, rather than liberating. A majority of people, if asked, would probably *say* they subscribe to the latter view; but the general tone of society betrays a strong commitment to the former.

The adults who claim to support stern coercive discipline upon young people in school are not prepared to impose it outside the school. Parents who state their desire for authoritarian control in the school do not and will not exercise it in the home. The mood of the times, the attitudes and values current in North American society, will not sustain schools in a return to authoritarianism and censorious selectivity.

And if the school tried, it would succeed only with those few students who chose to accept that kind of regime, thus failing in the mandate given by a society which has indicated than ten or twelve years schooling should be, *for everyone* a prelude to entry into adult life.

It would fail with the rest, as it did in the past, because the rest would see nothing of value for them in being subjected to tasks that they could not handle and which seemed to them so artificial that they would not be interested in trying.

John Goodlad is worth quoting at length on this topic, as on so many others. "Students," he says[1], "are inordinately adept at frustrating goals held by teachers.

1 *J. I. Goodlad, "Identification and Formulation of Desirable Educational Goals," Program Development in Education. Editors Blaney, Housego and McIntosh. Vancouver: UBC, 1974.*

Decline in the effectiveness of many secondary schools, for example, suggests a poor interface between today's youth culture and school programs. Many young people choose not to defer to this institution. . . . To use children and youth genuinely as data sources in goal-setting – long talked about in educational circles – would be a significant breakthrough in program planning."

A truly humane and effective school would be one in which students were able to be themselves and teachers were able and willing to understand their perceptions and needs and respond accordingly. In more concrete terms, we might even go on to argue that three of the most urgently needed reforms in education are: the establishment of continuous provision for in-service training, consultation and counselling for teachers; the injection of practical relevance into teacher education; and reduction of class size to the point where students can act and express themselves spontaneously without chaos.

As was said earlier, nothing is of any significance in school except the change that it produces in the student. The students themselves are the only source of accurate information about that, so if we are serious in our purpose we should be pretty concerned about the level of our skill in tapping that source. We should also be concerned about our ability to understand how the student perceives what we are trying to do. It cannot be repeated too often: the student reacts only to what he or she perceives. No stated goal, no design or program, however ingenious, has any real meaning except in the way in which it is perceived by the student, or any real consequence except as measured by the change produced by its interaction with the student's personality, previous conditioning and past experience.

These facts are certainly not new. What is new, however, is the weight that is given to them in the contemporary school. Most of us can remember a system in which the teacher's goals were paramount, (though generally determined for him or her by outside agencies), and in which any failure on the part of the student to comprehend and adopt those goals (or pretend to do so) was regarded as evidence of incapacity or insubordination – both punishable by censure and, eventually, by exclusion. Undoubtedly, a lot of teachers can be found who feel some regret at the passing of that era; but it is a fact that it is over and gone, however vocal the resentment expressed outside the school system.

The school has to design and redesign its procedures to take account of the student's perceptions. There is no escape from that. Those who lament the fact must realize that the principles of automatic respect and obedience to command no longer reign in the family or in the Canadian society. To go on trying to operate the school in the command-obedience model in the absence of a supportive social consensus is vain, and is a guarantee of alienation, sterility and frustration.

The alternative, of course, is not to hand over responsibility for planning and design to adolescents who do not have the maturity, the experience or the breadth of vision to exercise it. To do so would be manifestly unfair. Abdication by teachers and administrators, though hailed as admirable in some of the sentimentalist publications of what Lenin so well described as the "infantile left", is teachery visited upon the student. Functions must be rationally assigned to those who are best fitted to perform them. But the over-riding discipline to which all planning must conform is the fact that there is no possible starting point except where the student is, nothing for the school to build upon except what the student perceives, nothing to work with except what the student has at his or her command. And the assessment of these factors must be realistic. Sentimental adults who are guided by what they think adolescents *ought* to perceive and feel, and who are really protecting their own insecurities or prejudices, are as much a danger to the welfare of students as their arch-conservative colleagues who hanker for the arbitrary and censorious authority of the old regime.

The effort of re-orientation is, of course, enormously difficult. It means commitment to pluralism, to a multiplicity of purposes and methods, in an institution that tends strongly towards conformism (and is much more easily run on the basis of single-minded uniformity). Moreover, if we really want what we are doing to make sense to the students so that they will not frustrate our goals but will help us to shape them realistically, we have to make a tremendous effort of honesty – not easy in a society that is not always prepared to approve honest motives. Adult society, after all, quite clearly wants the school in *some* respects to contradict, in its name, the values which its manifests in its own behaviour ("Don't litter", it wants us to tell the kids; "don't smoke; drive carefully and considerately. Don't do as we do – do as we say." Every time the prevalence of some unwise form of behaviour becomes a concern somebody is sure to say "the remedy lies in the schools". Many adults, including parents, want to see the school putting the kids "in their place" in ways they are not prepared to do it themselves. None of this really helps to build trust.) In other respects the adult society will not tolerate contradiction of its prejudices. Rejection by one school board in 1976, of a program of family life education, carefully planned by teachers and administrators in consultation with medical authorities and church leaders, was hailed by the leaders of the successful lobby as a "victory over the smut peddlers". ("The next target," said one trustee, "is the magazine vendors.") Student and teacher reaction varied from amusement to contempt.

In this kind of setting, it is not easy for the school to pursue its goal of objectivity and moral honesty. As was earlier remarked, there is no place to start

except where the student is; but the adult community is not always prepared to face the facts – or to allow the school to face the facts – of the existing state of adolescent knowledge, belief and opinion. The last thing that many adults want to see is an effective "interface between today's youth culture and school problems". In the age-old conflict between crabbed age and youth, that is too big a concession to the enemy.

Where, when and how are kids to learn how to cope with life unless the school is prepared to take a stand on this? True, the school must be answerable to its community, must provide for community participation in goal-setting and planning. But it must not be dominated. It has to explain itself, but it must not abdicate. The community must find an open door for participation in debate and discussion, but it must also respect the professionality and the integrity of the educator. It is the educational duty of the school to foster the capacity for knowledgeable and responsible choice, in all its dimensions, to make the issues and dilemmas of life visible to students for what they are, to teach the skill of reasonable doubting and the skills of decision-making, not to proclaim false axioms. to start by denying the facts of what adolescents know, think, believe and feel, by substituting genteel or sentimental fictions for sober recognition of the actual viewpoint of the student, is a guarantee of failure.

The willingness of the community to allow this kind of honesty is a measure of the worth of the community itself. Only a society open to debate will allow its schools to challenge its prejudices and values and propose alternatives. Only a regenerative society will tolerate regenerative schooling.

Certainly there are powerful elements in Canadian society which are opposed to any regenerative effort, and they are finding vocal and articulate spokesmen. Some of these are high in the industrial hierarchy, and these regularly attack the school system (with the support, let it be said to their shame, of some of the senior administrators of that system, particularly in the industrial region of Ontario) on the grounds of its lack of "efficiency" as measured by the criteria of business and industry.

This is a particularly evil kind of irony. Industry has set a fine example of disdain for the realities of the surrounding world. It pours its wastes (often in toxic form) into the environment, at enormous human and financial cost to the general population, and dumps its human victims into a social environment that is equally over-strained. Then it boasts of its cleverness in reducing its own costs and increasing its productive "efficiency", and chides us for the money we have to spend coping with its outrages. It constantly seeks to transfer the real costs of its activities to the taxpayer, then complains that public services are too generous and

governments too intrusive. It is ruthless in eliminating jobs, and complains that too much is spent on welfare. It seeks to maximize profit and evade social responsibility, then complains that the school is failing to teach old-fashioned morality and respect for work.

The scoldings of the captains of industry and business provoke a special kind of disgust in teachers who are struggling to excite ambition and creativity and curiosity in the children of a community that has been numbed and defeated by the mindless indifference of industry towards human well-being, by the tyrannies and depradations of the corporations. Nothing is more discouraging than to see the effect upon children of parental attitudes which are formed and bounded by the expectation of eternal and inescapable poverty.

But that is a digression from the main point, which is that the major concern of the secondary school is – or ought to be – to develop the student's competence to face the world, not to impose a veneer of conformism suited to the requirements of self-interested minorities. The only possible starting-point for that development is the reality of the student's prior condition. Schools, in their programs and activities, must reach to where the student is. ("Theatre arts," said a principal assailed by back-to-basics criticisms, "may be the one thing in the school day that turns a student on. If it does, the effect will carry over into his whole attitude to learning. Take it away, and you've lost him.") And if we are going to go on insisting that young people must go to school, we must make an equal effort to reach *all* of them, not just the easy cases; because school, unlike industry, can't cook its books, cannot evade its costs by dumping them into someone else's domain.

To say that is at once to rule out standardization and uniformity of program, and to assert that individual variance must prevail over institutional convenience in educational decision-making. To put it another way, the apparatus of teaching and school management has to be de-institutionalized and made more responsive to students' needs in the terms in which they themselves perceive them. Choice, aided by careful and responsible advice, is a right that we are bound to concede to students in return for imposing compulsory schooling; that is the only principle that offers even a gesture towards real equality of treatment, because it respects difference. To insist upon treating two unlike people in the same way is not equality. It is the perpetuation of an inequality that may be not only unjust but also injurious to the well-being of society.

To make the student feel that the school is willing to accommodate his or her individuality is also the only way to counter the undesirable institutionalizing of the adolescent peer group. That, of course, is not a phenomenon that is entirely

within the school's power to control. It has arisen from many factors – including the commercial greed of massively powerful merchandizing combines (both licit and illicit) which saw the promise of vast new markets in the promotion of a cult of institutionalized youth. But one factor, undeniably, has been the increased retention of adolescents in a school system which, by emphasizing adult antagonism, favoured the growth of collective consciousness among its more or less alienated clientele.

It is an unhappy fact that the indoctrinating influence of the peer group – the continent-wide solidarity of which offers young people an escape from the disciplines of adult institutions into a premature, dangerous and, indeed, illusory kind of freedom – has meant that the school years have become for very many young people a process of victimization by one or other of the alienated counter-institutions of society. Statistics on the increase of stress, measured in emotional illness and suicide, illuminate some of the facets of the problem with a horrible clarity.*

If, then, enlightened teachers insist that the student has to be given the feeling that school is a welcoming place, worthy of his trust, supportive of his self-esteem, and responsive to his input, they are not being sentimental. They are being practical, recognizing that there is no other way to get through – no other way to soften the tradition of collective resistance that has culminated, in recent years, in effective defiance, and no other way to rescue adolescents from exploitation by those who would take advantage of their distorted perceptions and misguided solidarity.

But how is this to be done?

Again we come back to the question of what the school should be seeking to teach, and why. Many, many attempts at reform have been ineffectual because they were changes in decor, not in the course of real events as perceived by students, or because they were changes in the quantity of that which was inappropriate in

* *Suicide, now second only to automobile accidents as a cause of death in adolescents, has trebled in frequency in the last twenty years – the years of major growth in high school retention. For every successful attempt, it is estimated that 60 unsuccessful attempts are made. I am not suggesting that there is a direct causal connection between school retention and suicide. I am suggesting, however, that the various events that drive adolescents to final despair are more likely to happen in the social climate of schools (or colleges) than in the world of work; and if they have social origins somewhere else their effects are likely to be intensified by the social and emotional climate of the traditional school. This, I think, is a matter deserving much more attention and concern than any alleged "loss of standards". In fact, if research were to put a dollar tag on the consequences, which should not be difficult, the figure might even worry the Chamber of Commerce.*

kind. It was earlier pointed out that to offer less of the wrong thing was not a useful response to student "failure". It is equally true that the school will not be improved by doing more of the wrong kind of thing, or by doing the wrong thing in a different way.

Again it must be asserted that the goal must be the greatest possible competence in the management of life both in its private and its public aspects, and the starting-point must be the present condition of the student. Much of the criticism directed against the school comes from a viewpoint which is indifferent to the former and contemptuous of the latter.

Canadian critics have been deeply frustrated by the abolition of external examinations which would have provided "revealing" statistics of the kind featured in a recent British editorial.* In that article, it was stated that in one of the poorest sections of Liverpool "last year only twelve kids out of 4,362 in the district passed GCE (General Certificate of Education) A level". Later, the writer complains that "the ultimate gap yawns between a tolerant, non-pressurized, less competitive education and the fact that awaits children once the school gates close: a scrabble for a job, professions that favour literacy, engineers who can add up, postmen who can read". The argument would seem to be that a less tolerant, more pressurized school system would produce more A level passes (how many more, out of the 4,350 "failures", is not suggested) and *therefore* prepare everyone better for the "scrabble" for jobs.

In his apparent concern over the lack of rigour in the schools, the writer neither documents the harm supposedly done to the kids who stayed to the end of high school without reaching the A level, explains how they would have been helped by being driven out earlier by a more competitive system, speculates about the effect on the job market of attainment of an A level GCE by all 4,362 students, explains why that would solve the problem (if one exists) of non-reading postmen and non-adding engineers, nor discusses the reasons for the meaninglessness of that academic target in the eyes of the underfed kids in the slums of Liverpool.

Even without the statistics, criticism along the same lines abound in Canada. A recent example was a notably silly letter to the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* from a lecturer in a community college. Uttering the fashionable complaints about "decline of standards", the author of the letter suggested – apparently seriously – that the deficiencies of today's high schools would be revealed if students were

* *Guardian Weekly, August 30, 1965, p. 10*

subjected to university examinations of twenty years ago, or from European universities!

Such nonsense has to be vigorously denounced wherever and whenever it appears, not only because it subverts fact and twists logic to a point where rational reply is impossible, but because it is a campaign in support of exclusiveness. Presumably the British editor would be happy to see an academically-oriented school set up in the slums of Liverpool, where a properly intolerant, pressurized program would boil off the scum and retrieve perhaps twenty or more A level graduates, rather than only twelve, and put the others in their place, instead of pandering to the needs of the other 4,500 for some self-esteem and minimal competence. And the Ottawa letter-writer, who clearly feels that the function of the school is to satisfy the narrow concepts of academic literacy that were in vogue twenty years ago, rather than the wider-reaching, more realistic and more exacting criteria of educational effectiveness that are now current, is obviously another supporter of "the old exclusion game".[1]

The real complaint of these people is that the universal right of access to genteel schooling has not produced universal respect for gentility, nor even widespread respect for genteel institutions. Their great disappointment is that the enormously increased numbers of students who have been marched through the high school in the last ten or fifteen years have not felt within themselves a sufficient sense of inferiority in failing to meet the genteel criteria of scholastic skill, and their complaint is that the school should somehow have compelled its students to admit their inferiority whether they felt it or not.[2] They did not really want to see a more truly general education provided; they wanted to see a controlled extension of recruitment of people to the service of the elite minority, using the traditional instrument of language as a means of making and maintaining social discrimi-

1 *The phrase is taken from A Murder of Quality, a novel by John LeCarré, set in an imaginary English "public" (i.e. private) school. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1962). LeCarré whose real name is David Cornwell, graduated from Berne and Oxford and taught modern languages at Eton. In another perceptive reference to the purposes of "Carne", the high-prestige school of his novel, he compares its orientation to that of a censorious snob who "likes people to compete so that she can make fools of them". The first statement in a brief foreword to the book is that "there are probably a dozen great schools of whom it will be confidently asserted that Carne is their deliberate image."*

2 *An English industrialist, in a speech last January, asserted that the schools should be concentrating on "the basics", and turning out young people who are "clean and neat with a sense of humility".*

nation. Their notion of values is about as sound as that of their predecessors who insisted that no one was truly educated who did not have first-hand knowledge of the Latin and Greek classics.

The reactions of teachers to this barrage of criticism vary considerably. Some are sympathetic, because they feel betrayed by a society which no longer endorses the doctrines and disciplines which they served with such dedication. As graduates of a selective and exclusive system, they had wished to practise selection and exclusion, and resent being prevented from doing so. Some complain that the increase in the number of optional subjects has reduced the time that was formerly allocated to their specialty. Thus, for example, a teacher in one Ontario school (which formerly served an academically-oriented middle-class population) complains of a reduction of 60 per cent, in the last seven years, in the time devoted to formal English composition, along with an increase of 30-35 per cent in class size. (Not all his colleagues, however, would agree with him in condemning the emphasis now placed on literature and creative writing.)

Most teachers interrogated on this topic, however, assert firmly that the number of students in each age group who emerge from high school with a respectable level of competence in reading, writing and mathematics is at least as high as it ever was, that the criteria by which these competencies are assessed are more sensible than they used to be ("Who" asked one veteran match teacher, "ever really learned anything of value by being able to calculate the volume of a sphere? And what sense did it make to use that to separate the sheep from the goats? "), and that the real targets of the critics' wrath are the large number who now stay at school to learn some useful life skills and some understanding of their world instead of being "failed" for the greater glory of the academically-minded.

Some teachers, however, maintain that if there is insufficient provision, or insufficient possibility of providing, for the needs and differences of individuals, standards in the learning group "will tend to be set by the low average students", and in some schools it is stated that because of increased retention the "standard" levels in reading and mathematics have dropped by two or three grades in the last seven or eight years. If such a situation exists, though, the solution does not lie in the elimination of the less advanced students by a return to standardized examinations, but in greater individualization of programs. There are many good examples to be found. Clear and precise objectives worked out in consultation with specialists (especially important in the field of reading), accurate measurement of progress, and the knowledgeable use of technology (again, especially in reading,) show impressive results.

It must always be remembered that employers are demanding a higher level of reading ability from a wider range of people than ever before, while at the same time people are less dependent on reading than ever before as a means of receiving information or of entertainment. Print is only one of many media, and for very many people it is the least used. It is only to be expected that young people for whom the effort of deciphering the written word is genuinely difficult will be hard to convince that they are missing much. Nevertheless, some notable successes are being achieved by committed teachers. Their technique is, in the spirit of Ashton-Warner, to approach reading and writing in a non-threatening, non-condescending, unpressured way, using the materials that are most real to the students – newspaper advertisements, for instance, and, in some very impressive cases, the kids' own unsuspected capacity for poetic utterance. In one instance, a class of students handicapped by poor reading skills works towards publication of a newspaper and an anthology of poems. The goal of publication, with its promise of self-esteem, provides motivation for earnest self-criticism, group evaluation and peer teaching, resulting in astonishing progress in spelling and grammar. Some of the poetry is extraordinarily moving. So is the visible strength of the teacher-student rapport.

Students themselves certainly seem to be much more articulate, self-possessed and clear-thinking than their predecessors of a generation ago. They are amused by suggestions that they are inferior to their elders in competence or diligence. Where, they ask, *are* all these extraordinarily literate, mathematically skilled, knowledgeable adults to whom they are supposed to be inferior? And that, it must be conceded, is a good question.

Today's secondary students are, in general, better informed (and more usefully informed) than any of their predecessors. They have more respect than was general in the past for the competence of their teachers, but are also more exacting in their evaluation of teachers. They have strong views, especially, on the question of teacher-student relations, possibly because, as part of their notably improved critical ability, they have a better understanding of what good teaching is. They appear to appreciate the possibilities offered by an enlarged range of choice in the curriculum, though they feel, quite keenly, the need for guidance so that they may make more responsible choices.

Undoubtedly some teachers find all this disturbing. The majority, however, accept that student perceptions and needs are the basic reality of the school – that nothing happens unless it happens in the perceptions of the student – and are responding energetically and imaginatively to the challenge of a less inhibited generation.

These, of course, are large generalizations, subject to many local variations. One more might be added. Senior high school students tend to be quite critical of the level of performance of their younger brothers and sisters in elementary school. Is it that deterioration is really imminent, or are these young people simply demonstrating, in their disparagement of their juniors, that they have grasped the essentials of the adult role?

V. FROM WHY TO WHAT AND HOW

Education, it was asserted earlier, is the process of integration of the growing individual into a healthy social collectivity. This will include, for instance, teaching him or her to make a knowledgeable choice of a socially useful vocation. It will mean offering not only an adequate training in the skills required to practice that vocation competently, but also the knowledge needed to take part in the collective task of improving the conditions of its exercise. One example will illustrate these points. A student in one type of community may be well-advised to seek a career in mining. To do so sensibly, he or she should understand what will be involved, for the next several years, in mine-related work, and should try to master the skills that will offer the best chance of advancement in that rapidly-changing industry. But a competent miner will also be knowledgeable enough to understand his union's policies on health, safety and welfare, and to make an input to the shaping of those policies. (This is not a hypothetical example. In one mining town the industry, striving to convert from primitive blast-and-shovel methods to a highly automated operation, was able to recruit only twelve high school graduates last year, out of a total of a hundred and fifty school leavers, and management and union alike are frustrated by the indifference and incompetence of a labour force with an eighty per cent annual turnover.)

Integration will also include the learning of the skills of family and home management, and the development of a mature and considerate self-confidence in co-operative activities with others. (In the example just quoted, a major problem is the inability of young people to imagine, still less construct, an agreeable way of life utilizing the abundant recreational and social possibilities of the region. Their major goal is to "escape" to the prefabricated amenities of the distant city. Their educational strategy is to aim for university entrance and fall back, if need be, upon typing or auto mechanics. In other words, the school is, so far, failing sadly in its integrative purpose.)

It is equally wrong, of course, to overstate the integrative purpose and to declare that education is doing what it must if it "fits the individual for life". Life as we live it may not be good, and our way of organizing it may represent acquiescence in a partial and distorted view. Erich Fromm has pointed out that man is too adaptable for his own good. Apparent success in adaptation to an increasingly artificial environment may be a sure path to evolutionary decline and extinction. In the short run, neurosis, alcholism, drug addiction and crime are already alarmingly prevalent as modes of individual "adaptation" to various environmental factors, ranging from the squalor of poverty to the boredom of affluence. What the school somehow has to do for adolescents then is to strengthen their power of resistance to overready adaptation by giving them the means – and the desire – to combat the pressures of their environment and work for its improvement.

The trick is to make the passage from the airy-fairy to the nitty-gritty.

Philosophy will not tell you what to do on Monday morning; but without a philosophy it may not matter what you do on Monday morning. Questions about curriculum and school organization take us back inescapably to the crucial decision that has to be made about the purpose of enlarging access to secondary education. Is it to make sure that everyone goes through the same mill, to be ranked, selected (or rejected) and indoctrinated to suit the purposes of existing elites? Is it to prolong the commitment to diverse personal development which seems to have been made in the elementary school? Or is it to improve everyone's chances of acquiring competence in the management of adult life?

Theory will not tell you what to do on Monday either. But without a sound theory to pull our fragmented perceptions together, the things done on Monday may be mutually contradictory and self-defeating.

What makes adolescents learn?

There are – there have to be – as many answers as there are adolescents. But underlying them, too, there have to be some common human factors, some basic principles of motivation.

Learning is a movement out of one frame of reference into another, broader one. It is, in the words of the classic cliché, an adventure. It is the abandonment of the familiar in favour of the unknown.

Not everybody likes adventures. Some are attracted by them; some fear them; some are simply bored by the prospect. Not many people are willing to plunge from one uncertainty into another, nor to move away from a secure base into the unknown without some confidence of being able to find, eventually, another safe haven. The most insecure are the least adventurous.

So it is with learning. No one can learn very much who does not have some sense of personal security, based on a sense of identity, some basic self-esteem, some belief in his or her abilities, and some coherent structure of ideas about the nature of things. Not many people really want to learn very much, on the other hand, unless their tranquility is disturbed by some promise of increase pleasure or by inescapable evidence that their way of seeing things, the frame of reference by which their actions are regulated, is mistaken.

These are very basic principles, upon which all curriculum design and teaching methodology must rest. They are really just a different way of saying that each of us is for ever trying to come to terms with life by building a shell of illusions to live in. If we outgrow the shell, or if it is damaged, we modify it; bold individuals, sure of their strength, may sometimes leave their shell voluntarily to make a dash for a bigger and better one; but if the shell is cruelly crushed the inhabitant is likely to be maimed. It is well enough established, and too often forgotten, that anything which offers a serious threat to our frame of reference produces disorientation, irrationality, depression, panic or total flight from reality. Extreme examples have been well documented in cases of torture, disaster and child abuse. In the impersonal atmosphere that is so common in over-sized high schools, equally extreme examples are not unknown. Less extreme cases occur far more often than we like to think, though we spend a great deal of time deploring and trying to cope with the behaviour which results.

In one massive comprehensive school, three days after the start of the school year, a teacher came across four new students who had so far done nothing but sit in a corner of one of the halls, without registering or making any course selection. They cried with relief when they were "found": they had not known what they were supposed to do, and had been too paralyzed with fear of the size of the place to ask anyone.

Disturbance at a level deep enough to cause distress does not stimulate learning. That level varies from person to person and from day to day, and the teacher who does not have the time, the ability or the inclination to get to know his or her students and to read the warning signs of distress is not going to be a good teacher. Instead of learning, the distressed student will retreat into defensive behaviour of a primitive and non-rational kind, aimed at avoidance of the challenge. If physical withdrawal is impossible, psychological reactions varying from hostility to outright denial of the reality of the situation will result.

What is confusing in such a case is that the observer may not be aware of any drastic change in the external circumstances to account for these reactions. And, indeed, there may not be any very great change in the external circumstances. The high school is dealing with adolescents, who are going through profound change within themselves. In combination with quite trivial events, or even without any definable change in the external situation, the emotional turbulence of adolescence can produce big enough changes in outlook to have a disastrous effect on the sense of security and personal worth.

"Look," said one teacher, "Jimmy comes in here at peace with the world. In the space of five minutes one teacher pounces on him because his library book is overdue, another wants to know why he's a day late handing in his assignment, and

a third gives him hell for having his rubbers on in the hall. Trivial incidents in each teacher's day, but they're enough to destroy the day for Jimmy. All right, he has to learn to keep track of the days and leave his rubbers at the door: but we owe it to the kids to make the effort to keep these things in proportion in *their* lives as well as ours."

Two main conclusions must be drawn. The first is that the school, which now plays such a very large part in the social and *therefore* the personal development of people, should take careful account – much more than is generally the case at present – of the emotional aspects of growth through adolescence. This involves recognition of the special sensitivities of boys and girls in this period of life, and of the exaggerated perspectives which may give enormous significance to events and circumstances that seem quite trivial to the adult. It implies deliberate attention to the need to learn how to cope with emotions and the events which provoke them. The purpose must be the development of a strong sense of security through a sense of identity, clear and confident awareness of ability, and the integration of perceptions into a coherent and realistic frame of reference. The implications for school organization and for curriculum are very far-reaching.

The second is that a stimulus to learning must be provided either by the promise of pleasure or by disturbance of the frame of reference by exposure to anomalous phenomena – to some event or fact or circumstance that refuses to be fitted into the student's concept of the nature of things.

Pleasure need not be immediate, though it has to be close enough to offer the hope of attaining it reasonably soon; and its nature is more complex than its puritanical detractors sometimes seem to realize. Hardly anyone of any age is immune to the lure of status symbols, and nearly everyone finds pleasure in status acquired through recognition of achievement – the successful translation of ability into accomplishment. We all enjoy showing that we are able to do what we have learned to do, just as we all resent being shown to be incapable. For the adolescent, especially, pleasure and pain are closely bound up with pride and humiliation; yet adolescents are far too often treated as if they had no right to either emotion.

The importance of *doing* as an aspect of learning cannot be overstressed. Living is *doing*, not *being* The act is the proof of what we are and the test of what the world is. Passivity, still the besetting vice of the classroom, is the enemy of learning.

To teach, then, we must either offer ways of gaining pleasure through action or disturb the student's idea of the nature of things, or both. Disturbance, however, must be carefully managed and adjusted to the tolerance of the individual, so that it arouses curiosity, not fear.

Curiosity in the adolescent is linked to a very strong awareness of new and ill-defined powers of perception and action (often quite mystifying and sometimes frightening) and, with that, a new and quite intense feeling of vulnerability. The conceptual framework that the child has constructed for his or her own security suddenly becomes inadequate, too constricting, lacking in satisfactory answers – a shell outgrown, a frustrating set of obsolete limitations, prohibitions and obligations. Tentative probing from inside cannot extend it, because it is too inflexible to accommodate the new and different awareness of the adolescent. The nature of the new powers and the new understandings that are making themselves felt is not clear enough for their owner to find appropriate directions for safe exploration. To be held within the child's framework of relationships is intolerable, to break out into an unknown vastness is too terrifying, and to be prodded into movement in a direction in which no advantage is seen is exasperating.

School does little or nothing for adolescents in this quandary. Most commonly, it tells them firmly that they aren't children any more, and then proceeds to treat them as if they were. Less commonly, it treats them as if they were mature men and women (of a subordinate class of course), and this can be agonizing for the boy or girl who is still wavering between childish dependency and adult autonomy. Nearly always, it projects the adult attitude of "knowing better" without carrying the conviction that what is known is what the adolescent needs to know.

So they come to each other's rescue with the intricate codes and structures, ethics, prohibitions and ready-made relationships of the peer group. When change in their perceptions produces curiosity at a level which threatens security, they save each other from fear and embolden each other to extravagant experiment. In so doing, they may in too many cases do each other deep harm, but perhaps no more than is suffered by the occasional individual who is rejected by the group and has to make his or her own accommodation to the alien world.

The question for the teacher is how to find the way to trigger curiosity, without threat, in the adolescent – how to bring provocative but controlled disturbance, and a valid promise of pleasure, to someone whose mode of being shifts elusively among the intellectual, sensory and emotional levels, whose symbolic perceptions are fluid and unstable, and whose vocabulary both of utterance and of thought is uncertain and inadequate.

For learners the key questions are "why? " and "why not? " When they are answered to the satisfaction of the learner, and only then, they cease to be

asked. This is important: the determining factor is not objective accuracy, but the satisfaction of the learner – his or her achievement of coherence in that framework of perceived relationships that everyone is constantly trying to build and maintain. All too often, when adolescents cease to ask the questions that are important to them, it is not because they have found a satisfactory answer but because they have decided that they aren't going to get one from that source. And the truth is that the teacher and the school will seldom have satisfactory answers to give. What is important is that the school provide real help in framing rational and pertinent questions, and secure the trust of the adolescent in the process.

What do these questions focus on? One teacher of English offered me an answer. One way or another, he said, the central concerns that an adolescent's mind turns to are life, death, love and transience – the four phenomena whose discovery marks the end of childhood. To keep adolescent curiosity alive means a continuous re-opening of the questions "why" and "why not", in controlled, non-threatening ways, in relation to the innumerable aspects of those four phenomena – a continuous, controlled disturbance of the framework of ideas within which the learner is shaping his or her life.

At the same time there must be ordered progression towards an ever wider view. During the school years the individual grows from the unquestioning self-centredness of childhood, through adolescent pre-occupation with individual identity, toward full consciousness both of his or her own individuality and of the collective identity of humanity (or at least to the capability of achieving such consciousness). The stage of growing awareness of one's individuality can be frightening, because it is also the discovery of loneliness, isolation and mortality. The only escape from isolation is love, which education tends to ignore.

A complete education would help the individual to escape from the solitary confinement of individuality by helping him to situate himself in the procession of the generations, and to bind himself to the human community by a growing understanding of his dependence and his obligations. The extended family did this. So did the great religions. In a society in which the extended family and religion have ceased to be matters of common experience, schooling must fill the gap. Also, in an era of global interdependence, the collectivity to which the individual is bound by the obligation of concern must be seen to be the whole of humanity. To develop this awareness, in terms that are emotionally compelling, is one of the most challenging and important imperatives confronting the school.

It is a fault of Canadian education in general, and of high school programs and curricula, that they lack the discipline of an over-arching philosophical and theoretical commitment.

In a thoroughly rational society, the design of schooling would start with an effort to identify the range of competencies which a responsible and autonomous adult will need both for the efficient regulation of his own life in the foreseeable future and for participation in the collective effort to improve the human condition. The next stage would be to decide, deliberately, which competencies are least likely to be acquired informally and incidentally outside the school; for it is to these that priority must be given in the design of the school curriculum. After that the skills and seminal knowledge common to these competencies, or to "families" or "clusters" of them, would be identified. Then a careful distinction would be drawn between those areas of learning in which personal survival needs and basic welfare are the predominant concern and those in which the collective interest must be placed ahead of individual preference. In the former case, concepts of "passing" or "failing" are meaningless, and comparative or competitive evaluation should never be mandatory. In the latter, it is very important that the student understand the need for appropriate and accurate measures of performance, and accept their rigorous application.

Consider, for example, the kind of family life course that is being developed in several school districts. In one phase, the values of mutual consideration, respect and the control of anger are stressed. What could a "B-" or a mark of 67% possibly mean in that kind of learning – so necessary in the harsh world of some of our inner cities? On the other hand, the boy or girl who has decided to make a living as an engineer must understand that the collective interest requires that society be selective, admitting competent aspirants to the practice of that profession and discouraging the others, and that rigorous examination of the relevant mathematical ability of competing candidates, by objective standards, is a moral necessity. Reluctance or inability to make that kind of distinction is a major cause of confusion, alienation and loss of credibility in secondary schools. Evaluation has been at times misused as an instrument of repression and at other times wrongly weakened as an instrument of necessary differentiation. If we could remember that it is the business of the school to confer power, not to enforce compliance, we might be more rational and more courageous both in doing away with evaluation where it is inappropriately repressive and in improving its accuracy where it is a necessary guide.

If we go wrong in failing to make distinctions, we err also in perpetuating some wrong ones. Such a one is the historic distinction between education for human growth and development, on the one hand, and academic or scholastic instruction on the other. Every so often someone raises the demand that the school concentrate on the latter – "do what schools are set up to do". To do so is not only to forget that some academic subjects hung on in schools because they were supposed to be "humanizing" (twenty-five years ago the Scottish universities

still used the term "Humanity" to identify Latin courses), but also to neglect or dismiss the question of the impact of the former upon the latter. Courses taken for no other reason than personal satisfaction, the development of leisure interests, or a desire for socializing, may well provide the stimulus without which academic learning would not happen. It may be going too far to argue, as one veteran teacher did, that "an interest in postage stamps may lead you deep into human and economic geography, or into the chemistry that explains the differences in inks and the stickiness of the gum" – but then, he had seen it happen and *caused* it to happen, because he was a good and wise teacher (now, at the age of seventy, scoring remarkable success in training the severely retarded). What, indeed, is really "basic" to successful and socially useful learning?

What we come back to here, of course, is the point made in Chapter IV – the reality of the school is what the student perceives it to be. There are really only two kinds of knowledge – that which links up with what the student knows and cares about in his or her own world, and that which does not. To offer the former is pointless unless its reference, its relevance, its impact and values *in the student's perceptions* are understood. To offer the latter is vain unless the student sees in it some promise of extended power – power to cope or to secure advantage. Where it's going to fit in the student's picture of self, life and the world is really a much more valid question, in curriculum design, than where it fits in the "course".

There was a time, I suppose, when the balance tipped strongly the other way, when the school held a monopoly on knowledge and children were much more naive and their patterns of perception less complex, neater, more orthodox, easier for the school to build upon in a standardised way. Children today know more than children ever did; but they have learned in a muddled and fragmentary way, through a variety of media and especially through exposure to television – that unending cataract of unrelated (and sometimes grotesquely mixed) information and misinformation. They integrate their perceptions somehow according to how they have been conditioned by their early life environment. Their encounter with orderly interrogation, in school, and with the demand of the teacher for orderly response, requires an enormous effort of intermedia translation and re-ordering of data, with which they receive very little help. They are seldom, in fact, interrogated in ways which allow them to show what they know. Most questions, rather, are designed simply to find out as fast as possible whether or not they have memorized a particular fact or formula.

This kind of questioning suited the former situation – remembered by most parents and still colouring their ideas about schooling –, in which most of the information at the student's disposal had been communicated in one medium, in

separate blocks, each highly structured. Interrogation was designed to match. The interrogator worked in the same mode and medium as had been used to convey the information, paid no attention to the gaps between the blocks, and was satisfied if a substantial part of the structure was reproduced. Some of the most successful students seemed to have a direct line from their ears to their memory to their mouths, with no confusing intervention by the brain.

This change is one of the main reasons why it is unrealistic and unjust to accuse schools and students of abandoning "standards". When learning was largely controlled by the school, verbally administered within a limited range, and examined by a process which demanded accurate playback, accuracy of form could be more easily insisted upon (though the effort was never all that successful, and it cannot be too often repeated that most of the failures went unremarked because they dropped out of school).

The main point to emphasize here, though, is that designers of curriculum and program, and teachers of methodology, need to take more account than they have in the past of the nature and problems of inter-media translation of data, and of the legitimacy of non-verbal expression (including creative effort in the pictorial, plastic and dramatic arts) as a medium of dialogue in the process of learning to live competently in today's world.

These, of course, are matters in which individual difference, and the difference between groups of students from various backgrounds, is a major factor – a further reminder of the importance of individualization in program design.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that individualization is not an absolute good. Carried to excess, it militates against necessary socialization Subjects or topics which lend themselves to group instruction should be so taught. To be denied the experience of membership in a learning group is to miss an important element of education. For all students, the school has great significance as a community in relation to which, and within the context of which, their individual identity is shaped. (For some, in fact, it is the *only* significant community. For others, this is the only significance of school.)

Most of this chapter has been taken up with consideration of the basis of motivation. Interrogation and observation of students strongly suggest that learning, to be successful, must be *felt* to be a step towards understanding of a bothersome mystery, a positive source of pleasure, a definite improvement in competence in the encounter with others, or a vocational advantage. There is no other motivation.

School has difficulty in keeping up with the change in emphasis among these four considerations, and in the manner in which they operate. Perhaps the biggest change in recent years, and the most important source of bafflement for teachers, is the diminution in the advantage conferred by schooling in terms of vocational advancement and social status, because so many more people are getting through school than ever used to. It is no longer the mark of distinction of a favoured minority. As advantage diminishes, the incentive to compete in the tasks assigned by the school also declines, and the three other considerations grow more important.

This is offensive to the conservative who sees coercion and competition as the major instruments of discipline and order; but if broad participation is to be maintained and made more of a reality, diminished competitiveness is an inevitable outcome. So is a diminished power of coercion, and an increased openness of choice.

But choice is meaningless unless it is knowledgeable. In fact, freedom to choose brings no satisfaction, only irritation, unless it is accompanied by guidance and advice. Students respond well to opportunities to take part in constructing their own programs if they are sufficiently mature to cope with the choice they are given, if they feel that choice is genuinely open, and if they feel they have access to honest, authoritative advice.

Without guidance, choice of programs and courses can be bewildering and frightening. Where there is strong guidance at home, backed by clear parental perceptions, there may be no problem in its successful exercise. When that kind of support is lacking in the home, the school must supply it. More often than not, the student will have very little idea of what is involved in making choices, and little understanding of the commitment he or she ought to be making in selecting a course (the ideas of choice being somehow confused, all too often, with the notion of freedom of caprice and exemption from responsibility). When you are dealing with students who can scarcely read the list of options, still less comprehend their implications, the problem is compounded. It is, to start with, a twofold problem: how do you provide *adequate* counselling for *all* students, and how do you educate young people in the art of serious and responsible choice?

Nor is individual choice the only dilemma encountered in the search for a more properly responsive school. Decentralization of curriculum design, which is clearly an imperative reform, brings another set of difficulties. It is a little like existentialism or situation ethics: it puts the burden of a decision which is really universal in its nature upon an individual whose vision is limited by the hedges of

immediacy and whose powers reach only to the fences of his own ability. It has to be handled with care: it tends to favour the premature implementation of ill-considered and superficial philosophies.

School-based curriculum sounds like a good idea, and certainly it is a valuable corrective to over-centralized bureaucratic control. It has its perils, though. It can encourage parochialism. It can set too high a premium on gimmickry and showmanship. Combined with teacher turnover (still a problem in northern regions and other remote areas) it can produce short-lived commitments and abrupt changes, with a consequent accumulation of unusable materials and mis-spending of resource funds. It can promote experiment without evaluation. It operates to best effect when teachers are committed as teams to programs of long enough duration to permit the teachers themselves to develop and to respond to feed-back, when resources of advice and help, and in-service training in the skills of curriculum development, are available, and when opportunity exists for observation and comment by experienced people whose perspectives are wider than the local situation.

School-based curriculum should be seen as a means of encouraging alternative approaches to the design of strong long-term programs, not as an encouragement to whimsical and ephemeral diversity. This requires that teachers have the integrity to engage in evaluation as an integral part of experiment, the humility to accept judgment, the wisdom to respect the competence of others, and the dedication to seek continuous self-improvement.

VI. AND IN PARTICULAR

"The great thing about plants," said the horticulture teacher, "is that if you throw them across the room they don't bounce or clatter – they just lie there and die."

His students were mainly boys, and almost entirely from inner-city homes. His description of what they were doing was almost an allegory of his own work. "They learn," he said, "that these are living things, and will give evidence of the way they are treated. You can't fool a plant. If you treat it wrong it won't flourish – go beyond the limits of its endurance and it will die on you. Treat it considerately, with understanding of its needs, and it will thrive. They learn, really, that living things need love; not sentimentality, but concern translated into action.

"Besides," he added, "it's therapy for a lot of them. In the kind of homes a lot of them come from, they wake up after a bad night and know they're facing a bad day. They come here and go straight into the greenhouse, and they have these living things depending on them. They know they can't take their tensions out on the plants, so they work them out, caring for them. After half an hour in there, they're different people."

There are more prosaic justifications for offering the course. There are job openings in florists' shops and nurseries around the city, and though these kids would still have a lot to learn, they have a basic understanding that saves an employer a great deal of time and trouble. They learn how to take and fill orders, too – not just the procedures of correct billing and record-keeping, but the need for accuracy and reliability, and the responsibility of keeping a bargain and meeting a deadline.

These are the students who, if some people had their way, would have been filtered out at the end of elementary school, to join the thirteen per cent of their age group who are unemployed. When you watch them at work, and see how many of them, coming in with chips on their shoulders, go away with a reborn sense of personal worth, questions about secondary schooling come into very sharp focus.

Traditionally, we have generalized the patterns and processes of the high school from the particular case of those who planned to go on to university. The school was really for them, really there to provide the kind of rudimentary training in English, mathematics, science and foreign languages that the universities wanted their freshmen to have, and to apply the sort of tests that the universities regarded as *pontes asinorum* (and in the good old days, before the decline of literacy, university professors all knew what that meant!). Persuaded to accommo-

date those who couldn't hack it, the school responded by offering less stringent versions of the same kind of thing. Later, when merchants grew more powerful than gentlemen, the teaching of useful trades was reluctantly undertaken.

It would certainly make as much sense now, and possibly more, to invert the model – to place the emphasis uncompromisingly on the needs of those whom the traditional vocabulary called "non-academic", and regard academic specialization as an add-on for a limited few.

The "shops" area is an interesting place to spend time in. The teachers, to start with, are an interesting group. They are beset by chronic problems of certification and classification. (One province won't recognize degrees from extra-provincial universities because of inadequate "academic" content, so that an auto mechanics teacher has to spend two summers and a winter's evenings taking history and English literature courses. In another, the universities will neither give credit for courses of high quality taken at a technical college nor offer their equivalent.) Many of them feel beleagured and defensive, being often reminded that they carry neither the correction load of the English teacher nor the coaching commitments of the phys. ed. staff. Most of them could make much more money practising their trade than they do teaching it; many are in school simply because of an obstinate love of kids and of teaching.

The direct vocational value of "shop" courses is very doubtful, and in any case concerns only a minority of the students who enrol in them. What they principally offer, in interesting ways, is basic general education – experiences tending to promote personal development and competence in inter-personal and group relationships.

In shops, students can encounter the direct, uncompromising, non-discriminatory and consistent disciplines of material reality. They can learn to accommodate to and accept the characteristics of materials and the limitations of tools. They can learn to evaluate their own performance in objective terms. They can learn the satisfaction of creating something and seeing it stand the test of use. They can learn to connect cause and effect, and to see themselves as cause.

They can learn other things too: to cooperate with others, to share access to materials and equipment, to plan and implement jointly, to respect the common need for safety, economy and efficiency.

Whether they really do learn these things depends on the teacher; and an impressive number of shop teachers do see themselves, and conduct themselves, as

general educators. They are encouraged to do so by the readiness of students to confide in them, no doubt because of the nature of the subjects they teach. Students often seem to transfer to the shop teacher the characteristics of practicality and immediate usefulness that they find in the subjects taught – to see them as less antagonistic and more supportive than their more academic colleagues. Many of these teachers, as a result, end up playing a godfatherly role.

"Shop" programs – industrial arts – are better seen as an element in general education than as vocational preparation. Properly handled, they can teach people how to maintain their homes and cars, how to evaluate quality and buy sensibly, how to handle machines safely, and how to cooperate, to share time, materials and ideas. They can teach respect for tools, for materials, for accuracy, for industry and for constructive accomplishment, and these are things that everyone can benefit from. Seen as "vocational" programs, they tend to become dumping-grounds for students who are considered unfit for other courses.

One aspect of this deserves to be reiterated – that of the training in group collaboration that these subjects can provide. The idea that education should be wholly and solely equated with personal growth and satisfaction is a fallacy. Satisfaction without social integration is not possible for social man. Integration does not, however, mean submerging individual identity, nor enforcing conformity. It means arriving at a comprehended, desired and rational set of relationships. Opposition or dissonance between personal and social goals is disorienting and alienating. The experience of harmonizing personal and communal goals, on the other hand, is such a necessary part of education that if the school does not provide it, within the rational framework of an ordered curriculum, the student will either find it (to his probable hurt) in the peer group or suffer handicap in adult life for lack of it. That is a statement that is equally true of all students, and equally important for all, but its practical reality is best seen when we focus our attention on those students who were in the past the least regarded.

The suggestion that an improved model for the school might be developed by generalizing from the needs of its most "unsatisfactory" clients will raise some people's hackles, especially if it is interpreted as a plea for even greater attention to the malcontent minority. It is a discouraging fact that at all levels and in all departments of the educational enterprise, a disproportionate amount of time and energy is spent on reacting to the trouble caused by a relatively small number of cases of deviant behaviour, leaving very little available for the encouragement of the inoffensive majority. The further up the administrative chain one travels, in fact, the more true that is. The necessary preoccupation of the administration with instances of deviance often leaves dedicated teachers (and their students) wondering whether anyone really cares what they are actually doing and accomplishing. If

there is a solution to this, it probably lies in the area of general social reform rather than within the school; but at least the procedures of the school should, as far as possible, avoid the kind of over-formalized, over-regulated situation that forces people into delinquency.

It is probably true that in trying to make a move in this direction the schools have confused the ideas of choice, individuality, freedom, indifference, and licence. Everybody, given the right kind of help, can learn something well. It is a moral obligation of the school to provide, as far as is practicable, the range of choice and the kind of help that makes that statement a reality. But in return it is proper to insist that what is chosen is learned as well as possible. Moreover, the goal of autonomous competence has to be kept in view and autonomous competence is an idea that must be interpreted in the terms of the contemporary world.

It is not really honest to let young people think that it doesn't matter what they learn or how well they learn it. I have not been in any school that gave that message overtly to its students, but there are certainly some in which the kids have got hold of that idea, and where it is not being countered with any great firmness or confidence.

Precision in communication, for instance, is of the highest importance in a complex and highly inter-dependent society. It is hard to see that there is any merit in tolerating inexact language and misspelling. There may be times and places for insisting less upon precision than at other moments, but it is surely an absolute truth that people are helped, whatever their goal, by every step they make towards precise expression.

It is obvious that the crucial problem in dealing with large numbers of those students who now stay on in high school is their lack of reading ability. In "English" classes, it is easier than it used to be to adjust the level of competence needed for participation, so that students are not excluded at the outset by this disability. High-interest, simple-language materials are much more readily available to the teacher of English than they used to be – an especially necessary development, incidentally, for those schools which serve large numbers of immigrant families. But in other subjects the level of reading competence required is less controllable. Textual materials used in mathematics and technical subjects are often quite demanding in terms of reading ability, so that the poor reader suffers severe limitation upon the choice of courses open to him. Some teachers have done excellent work in adapting or creating texts that bridge this gap. In the absence of that kind of effort, there is a serious risk that certain programs and courses will come to be seen as pre-ordained for poor readers – to the detriment of those programs and to the disadvantage of the students concerned.

"Language competence ceases to grow," declared a reading consultant of considerable experience, "when the urge to self-expression is checked. After grade six there is too much emphasis on transactional language, with its limited and unadventurous demands." Transactional language, she affirmed, provided insufficient motivation for the learning and teaching of language skills. The kind of utterance usually required of the student who is learning physics or geography or French very rarely touches any of the deep springs of motivation or triggers any desire for wider-reaching competence in spoken or written expression. Can you imagine a student saying or thinking "I wish I had a greater mastery of language, so that I could give better answers in the chemistry class"?

What she was emphasizing was the value of courses in creative writing – so often misunderstood and maligned by "back-to-basics" advocates. I have seldom been so sure of the worth of anything as when, in another school district, I watched a teacher work with a class of "slow readers" in a program of creative writing that she and a colleague in the school had devised. The students were writing poetry, about themselves and their view of the world, for publication by the school. The reality, to them, of their topics, and the sensitivity of the teacher, combined to dissolve the artificiality of the school. The shared commitment to a work of quality (developed through quiet, unforced discussion and mutual criticism) encouraged them to pursue exactness of language and to extend their vocabulary in ways that nothing else could have done, and their reading ability gained accordingly.

It was interesting that a feature of that class was background music, chosen by the students. The unaccustomed sound was a reminder that in the real life of children and adolescents – both in the external reality of the world they live in and in the internal reality of their psychological development – the essential elements of awareness and learning are movement, participation, pattern and rhythm. For too many children, the school confirms the deprivation which they suffer in these respects at home. Music, dance, rhyme, action songs and games, picturing and modelling are more truly basic than the three R's, and are probably prerequisite to effective learning of the skills of communication. They are also basic to the teaching of the idea of purposeful, constructive discipline.

Some of this is conceded in elementary schooling. There is very little sign of its acceptance in secondary education, where such *genuinely* basic educational activities as music and physical education are, on the whole, poorly conceived and inadequately provided.

Part of the reason, I suppose, is the puritanical tradition that assigns these activities to the domain of "play" rather than "work". But surely we know by now that to disdain play is to reject three quarters of the educative process, half of its purpose, and most of the real meaning of civilization.

In spite of its professed "liberal" and "humane" purposes, the traditional school did and does a very poor job in the areas of cultural education and personal development. Within the school, in fact, these occur largely as accidental by-products. Outside the school, on the other hand, all kinds of agencies are engaged in the radical modification of cultural orientation and personal development (usually for monetary gain, licit or illicit, and seldom with any thought to the well-being of the target group or individual). The failure of the school in relation to its major declared aims suggests that it is either inept in the selection of its objectives, unrealistic in the definition of its purposes, or ineffectual in its methodology.

It is, of course, futile to think of the school as an instrument of cultural orientation and aesthetic awakening unless it operates, in this respect at least, as part of a general community effort. In the realm of the arts there is a real possibility of breakthrough to a genuine model of "community school". Drama, crafts and folk dance are good ways for adolescents and adults to encounter each other, to learn respect for each other and an understanding of the meaning of community, and to learn to cooperate. There are schools in which this is beginning to happen.

To come back, though, to an earlier point: even putting aside the important objective of healthy socialization and realization of collective identity, it has to be recognized that perception and awareness need both stimulation and the discipline of concept-formation, and that these facts are at the starting-point of all learning. Aesthetic education is – or can be, if well done – a key to general learning.

Reference was made earlier to the importance of physical education, particularly as a contributor to aesthetic growth. This point, incidentally, was also made by the international team of examiners appointed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1975 to report on Canadian education. "The contribution of physical education to the aesthetic and rhythmic elements in young people's lives, " said the examiners in their interim report, "has been broadly neglected and needs serious attention and development." Apart from that purpose, however, a major goal of physical education should be to lay the groundwork for lifelong fitness. Only now can this be said to be recognized on any significant scale. It is still unhappily true in too many places that the gymnasium is the most unimproved area of the school, devoted too often to the exigencies of competitive "sport", and serving the dehumanized purposes of an alienated institution.

This chapter opened with some comments on "vocational" education, a topic which also drew some strictures from the OECD examiners. "The present quality

of practical and vocational courses in high schools is not generally adequate," says the report, echoing my own earlier comments on the doubtful value of "shops" courses as direct vocational preparation.

The best way to make vocational education really effective as a preparation for work, and to make students see its relevance, is to move large parts of it out of the school. Alternation of work experience and work-related studies has paid off wherever it has been tried.

The concept of practical education, though, should be extended far beyond the narrow boundaries of preparation for work – if, indeed, we are serious about the school being a place of preparation for autonomous competence in the management of life. One group of students pointed out, for instance, that marriage is a major venture in adult life, involving the exercise of a wide range of skills and knowledge, and that the failure rate is rapidly increasing. School, they asserted, is deliquent in failing to provide instruction leading to competence in this important area of adult experience.

One element that is common across a wide spectrum of "practical" education is the attitudinal purpose – the need to develop the willingness to collaborate in a shared enterprise. Some experimental programs, involving such activities as wilderness excursions, seem to be very successful in promoting the idea of the obligation to share in chores and to cooperate in community service. These attitudes used to be a normal part of family living (at least for the children of the social strata that the high school catered to), but cannot be taken for granted any longer, for a number of reasons. Success in reviving them is a reminder of the value to the adolescent of a sense of immediate usefulness, and of the value of a clear and consistent set of expectations as an educative discipline.

To have expectations for young people is, of course, only one side of the coin. The other side is the assignment of responsibility. The exercise of "citizen" rights, not only in a learning group, but in the governance of the community of the school, and the opportunity to seek election to a position of responsibility in that governance, can be a valuable part of schooling. The limits within which the community can exercise self-government must, however, be made very clear at the outset and all the time, and the various authorities to whom other powers are reserved should be very clearly identified. Otherwise the whole apparatus of student government risks being discredited, and cynicism and hostility will be promoted.

The advisory powers of student governments (in relation to school funds, for instance) can be made quite wide, but should be explicitly defined – as should the

Principal's rights of veto – in a public Constitution. A "cabinet" system of student government, used as the basis for the development and submission of proposals bearing on club and social activity, student publications, and so on, with open debate of "bills" by a large student assembly, has worked well in a number of schools. There are schools in which "cabinet" responsibility extends to the raising and deployment of a corps of prefects, for the inspection and supervision of leisure areas and the like. This seems to work well as long as it is not seen as an imposition of a puppet regime by the administrative establishment. Trust and communication are crucial, and a great deal depends on the effectiveness of staff advisers.

Trust and communication are, of course, central to the whole effort of educational development. Adult perceptions and reasoning are not necessarily perceived in the way in which they are intended. In one school, for example, a teacher tried to lead a class into a study of the way in which scornful language confirms and perpetuates prejudice. The intention was to raise the thinking of the students to a rational and objective level. Unhappily, the discussion was experienced by at least one member of an ethnic minority as an embarrassing and hurtful re-enactment of past ordeals – and by his tormentors as a marvellous opportunity to rub salt in his wounds with impunity. Ideas that have been maturing in a teacher's mind for a long time may need very careful and patient introductory work before students are ready to cope with them in the intended manner.

If the ideas that the teacher is seeking to introduce are at all closely related, on the affective level, to issues that are current in the community, it is probably a good idea to find ways to involve people from outside the school in presenting them. In the whole field of the social studies, for that matter, and even in the applied sciences and the general area of life skills, community resources are generally under-utilized. It is useful for the school to maintain a directory of people in the community who are willing to serve as resource persons.

This is not an easy undertaking at the best of times, The fruitful use of community resources needs a lot of thought, planning and co-ordination, and the difficulty is certainly compounded both by the current tendency to increase the demands of the immediate situation upon the time and energy of teachers and by the pressure of administrivia upon the principal. Special difficulties arise, incidentally, when students are following French immersion programs in English-speaking communities. The effect, then, of using French as the language of instruction in a subject is to confine the study of that subject within the walls of the school.

Yet the planned, purposeful and controlled involvement in school programs of people with special knowledge in the general community seems to have paid off wherever it has been tried. It puts the student in touch with authentic sources of

knowledge, and it improves the public understanding of what the school is trying to do (provides that the involvement *is* planned, purposeful and controlled. The PR impact of an encounter with a bunch of bored students in a situation that lacks the discipline of a clearly defined learning purpose can be quite disastrous!) The effort involved in any attempt to amend curriculum so that it leads more surely towards autonomous competence is enormous. Enlistment of out-of-school resources may in the long run reduce the effort, increase its effectiveness, and diminish that isolation which is the most fertile cause of artificiality in schooling.

VII. THE IMPOSSIBLE MAY TAKE FOREVER

It was said in the first chapter that the orientation of the school should support "the development of confident independence", so that when people leave school they *are* adults, individually and socially competent.

A lot of people are prepared to argue, quite loudly, that such a goal is impossible, undesirable or both. The General Manager of one of the major chartered banks, for example, has said firmly that this kind of talk is heard only from "left-wing dissidents and fanatics", and that the schools are already doing too much mischief. They promote, he said, such pernicious ideas as the redistribution of wealth (adding that "business has to persuade government that the redistribution of wealth is wrong"). So much for autonomy and independent thinking as a goal!

There is a strong note of fear in the banker's comments, and fear is in fact a central element in many of the negative comments which get so much attention in the media. In part, the fear of education as a disturber of set ideas is a reaction to a confused and confusing environment. There is a strong yearning for certainty, for the arrest and reversal of change, for a return to the idyll of an imagined past in which goals were not debated, prerequisites were clear, authority was confident and choice did not arise – a vanished Eden in which the fruit of knowledge was still forbidden. To many people, the first step in such a return is to reassert control over the eternal disturbing element – youth.

It is easy to understand the desire for a return to order. Many Canadian schools are, in fact, experiencing a serious and painful dislocation as reformers try to impose the superstructure of a new regime upon the infrastructure of the old one. Scholastic schizophrenia is widespread. There is no more sure guarantee of discomfort, of the worst of both worlds, than a revolution partially accomplished. That is what the Canadian high school has experienced – half a revolution. Programs, courses and modes of evaluation appropriate to a liberal schooling in a free and self-respecting society have been adopted within an institutional and social framework in which liberality, freedom and self-respect are rare and suspect, and in which selective, elitist concepts still enjoy high prestige.

The report on Canadian education recently prepared by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development make the point clearly:

> "Canadian education has changed from following a basically selective principle of operation to one of trying to aid young people to develop. . . according to their needs and capacities . . . but . . . the efforts require still further improvement . . . Many of the school-related practices that reinforce

societal inequalities have occurred and endure precisely because they serve certain economic and political interests . . . The reasons for disquiet among teachers . . . seem to lie principally in the painful discrepancy between teachers' educational hopes and expectations and their disappointment face to face with reality. In addition, teachers often consider that the demands made by society upon the schools are hopelessly exaggerated."

Historically, the mid-point of a revolution has always been critical – the moment at which the initial ardour flags, the practical problems of implementation begin to seem more decisive than the revolutionary commitment, and the weakened impetus is easily diverted or subverted. Like a wave on a rocky shore, the first brave surge is turned and deflected and slowed, divided and parcelled into local instances of meaningless turbulence; and unless the rising tide brings another, stronger wave, the rocks retain their dominance.

There are a lot of wet rocks in Canadian schools, and a lot of muddy channels down which innovative energy has drained away.

Some of the key questions never were answered, nor even properly asked. For example: we have seen the school become, for many or most young people, the essential world of their adolescence. Have we really considered what kind of world it should be? Should it be visibly, clearly artificial, at the risk of alienating most students (and I have had difficulty finding anyone who did not have that kind of memory of the secondary school of the past), or should it be a representation of the real one? What risk would the latter entail of repelling the adolescent or outraging the parents? What limits would have to be set to reality to avoid the danger of injury? What kind of simulation would be useful, feasible and safe? What experiences should we be rehearsing? What key skills should we be concentrating on? Should we be listening to the Chamber of Commerce spokesman who says "People fail in the real world – they may as well get used to it at school", or to those who argue that consumer education and defensive driving should hold the central position once occupied by Latin and the Psalms of David?

Schools are under severe pressure from two sources of inappropriate demand. One lies outside the school – a social system that applies criteria of success and worth which are often irrelevant to any rational concept of social goals, and sometimes grossly immoral. The other is within the educational system itself – the code of academic status, the artificial value system of the educational institution. Since social elites tend to have strong affinities with each other, those two are often more closely allied than appears at first glance, But since the academic elite is socially subordinate to the commercial elite (you only have to meet a group of governors of a private school or of a college to see how true that is), it is the role

of the latter to issue rebukes and of the former to accept them. Within the academic establishment, of course, the rebuke is passed down the hierarchy. Every level blames the level below it for the discontent expressed by the commercial aristocracy. There is nothing new in that, but the accusations handed down from university to high school and from high school to elementary school are more bitter than ever before. The reasons are two-fold. One is that each level is making life harder for those above by passing on students who would formerly have been filtered out. (The reason for this is not just humanitarian; enrolments mean money, so that everybody *wants* students, because money is scarce these days.) The other significant point is that the commercial elites control the purse strings, and the educational elites are getting very nervous about producing students who may not meet the standards set by the paymasters. In particular, it is increasingly clear that an economically powerful element in society resents the socially levelling, democratizing effect of generalized access to a reformed secondary school system, and is deeply suspicious of the appearance of courses promoting consumer awareness and political consciousness.

The half-revolution started from below: the reaction comes from above. Revolutions usually operate that way.

So much depends on acceptance of change in the role of school and teacher, change in the posture they adopt. Students for the most part seem to accept that it is no longer the role of the teacher to be the source of all knowledge, and therefore an authoritative judge and authoritarian censor. Most parents do not.

The present state of tension, even of contradiction, within the secondary schools, between them and the public, and even within families, makes it even more difficult than usual to engage in educational planning. "Planning should be the one place where reason and logic prevail", a superintendent asserted. "It should protect a system against emotionalism, fads, political pressure and whim. These days, partisanship is so extreme and feelings run so high that it's getting a lot harder to provide that kind of protection."

And whom can we look to for the exercise of protective authority? The first instance responsibility rests with school boards. But, increasingly, school boards are showing up as the level of government at which the myth – or ideal – of democracy fails most miserably. "Trustees! " said another superintendent after a long evening of dispute over trivialities. "They badly need to be educated about the needs of kids and the nature of their own responsibilities before they're exposed to any question about policy. They should try to learn about the present before they think about future priorities. But try to tell them that! ".

It is more and more necessary to question the extent to which trustees really represent the community which puts them into power (usually through an "election" in which the issues are vague and irrelevant, the candidates virtually unknown, and the voter turnout minimal). But even if they were the perfect embodiment of the community, difficult questions would still arise. If we accept – as we must – that society continues to evolve at a fast rate, it obviously is not satisfactory for the school merely to respond to the expectations (that is to say, to correspond to the recollections) of the adult community. It must also try to lead the community towards more appropriate expectations – a venture which may involve both a claim to some new functions and a disavowal of some old ones. It will also involve teachers in new functions of liaison and mediation, as a necessary condition of being allowed to teach the way they feel they must teach.

In any case, there is a difficult problem of compromise between the evident need for adaptability and responsiveness, on the one hand, and the equally evident need for stability on the other. To cling to old ways simply because they have been proved to be administratively manageable is indefensible; but to swing any organization as complex as a school system into decisive innovation is too big a commitment to be permissible without the most careful examination of social and educational values, pedagogical soundness and probable outcome. Any commitment made on a large scale, affecting the schooling process to a significant degree, must be a long-term commitment; otherwise it is an irresponsible disruption of the students' environment. No year of a child's education, no generation of students, can be considered to be expendable in the cause of experiment.

Besides, as observed in a previous chapter, "there is no such thing as a pilot project". Not only is it a moral requirement that what is seriously started has to be seriously followed through: it is also a practical and political necessity.. It is virtually impossible to set up any "pilot" or experimental program without precedent or prejudice. Its termination is bound to be seen by someone as an outrage, even if a time limit was clearly and firmly stated at the outset. This year's experiment becomes next year's entitlement, staking its additional claim on available money and energy, and leaving that much less in the kitty for the development of new plans or purposes – or even for the maintenance of existing programs. This produces an inevitable hesitancy in face of any demand for innovation or experiment – an attitude often misunderstood and harshly judged by enthusiastic teachers.

Unfortunately, the rational assessment of the pros and cons of a proposed innovation, and also, for that matter, the whole planning process, are subject to interference from the spokesmen of special interests, and the loudness of the voices raised tends to carry more weight with political decision-makers than the wisdom of

the words uttered. Citizen lobbies and pressure groups may occasionally help to expose and correct an injustice or an imbalance, but for the most part they are a pernicious influence on educational planning and decision-making.

Somewhere out there, too often overlooked in the scuffling among petty politicians and banner-carriers, are the parents. The problem of finding an effective role for them is an intractable one. If a general invitation is issued, if the doors of the decision-makers are opened to them, it is likely that those who come forward will have their own strong reasons for doing so. Parents who seek interaction with the school too often show the same social biases, or the same range of eccentricities, prejudices and hobby horses, as the people who run for election to school boards. Those who do not come forward are at least refraining from interference – a negative virtue that many teachers prefer to encourage. There are, in fact, a lot of teachers who admire that kind of principal who can intimidate parents and keep them quiescent and acquiescent – and they may not be entirely wrong.

How, then, is planned change to be accomplished? It short-term, impulsive change is harmful, and long-range planning so hampered by the difficulty of fixing a locus of responsibility and bringing about the effective, rational and knowledgeable participation of the interested parties, how is the system ever going to be moved? Can it be turned into the second half of its revolution, or must its inertia bring it flopping back to its old ways?

It is difficult to be optimistic. It is hard indeed to imagine any future event or probable trend that will eliminate the hard-core elements of resistance – any wave that will displace the rocks. For most adults, school is still felt, at the gut level, to be a place where control over kids, *dominance* of the young, should be the central function. The temptations to punitive vindictiveness abound in the school. It is easier and infinitely more satisfying to be authoritarian – tyrannical at worst, paternalistic at best, and basically disapproving nearly all the time – than to accept the democratic commitment to seek the consent of the governed, along with the difficult responsibility for ensuring that choice is knowledgeable, well-considered and mature. In spite of the efforts of many, many teachers, school systems *as systems* are still far from making a decisive and effective shift to a truly comprehensive and supportive style of operation, and the pressure arising from the anxieties of privileged and influential sectors of the community may well prevent that shift from taking place. If it does, the high school will very soon become irreparably dysfunctional: we shall face the twenty-first century without effective schooling for our young people at the age when they need it most.

Statements about the "orientation" of a school sound as if they were both unduly sweeping and pointlessly abstract. But anyone who has been a teacher

knows that every school has a prevailing mood, a pervading tone, that affects everything from the style of its examinations to the mode of operation of the students' council. Naturally, there is a considerable variation from one school to another, within the limits of possibility. Differences show up with great clarity in such things as the choice of texts for literature courses, in the degree of innovativeness shown in curriculum relating to environmental education, consumer awareness, life management competence, values and ethical discrimination, and political and economic understanding, in the objectives and processes of evaluation, and above all in the styles used by teachers in their encounters with students. But everyone who has been a teacher also knows that underlying all this there is the orientation of "the system" – the basic nature of the functions assigned by society to the secondary school. In Canadian society, the high school is still perceived, by those who really control the decisions, as being mainly a device for social selection. As teachers well know, every step away from authoritarianism is a deviation from the central purpose of "the system". In face of the present resurgence of conservatism, any such deviation – even though it has the full support of the titular "authorities" (local administration, department of education, or even the Minister at present in power) – is a chancy enterprise, liable at any moment to run into the informal but effective veto exercised by the dominant elements in the community.

Teacher style was cited above as one of the most important factors in expressing the tone of a school. It's really a question of the extent to which the teaching staff as a whole is prepared, or allowed, to be sensitive to and care about the message that the kids are receiving, as opposed to the message that the teacher is sending.

Take vocabulary, for instance. For a message to get across, teacher vocabulary must be simple, concise and exact. A muddled statement carries a muddled message. There are, of course, individual situations in which lack of competence or confidence in the teacher is going to produce muddle whatever the intention. My present point, though, is that there is a difference in the extent to which schools *care* whether the student is being confused. At the authoritarian extreme, in fact, the process of teaching is actually a continuous form of testing, and a deliberate (though perhaps unconscious) obscurity of style is used to sort out the brighter students and lead the others towards failure.

It is unfortunate that three elements come together so powerfully in this. One is the traditional predominance, in the academic school, of the "integrity" of the discipline over the needs of the student. The second is the selective purpose – which, of course, means the search for grounds for rejection. The third is the difference in idiom between social groups. Any style of teaching that tends to confirm, rather than soften, that difference of idiom is an almost certain guarantee against learning unless exceptionally strong motivation already exists.

This kind of difference begins at a very basic level, of course, and the orientation of a school system can often be measured at first sight by the degree to which it reflects the middle-class conviction that doing is an activity with lower status than talking about doing.

Quite apart from what is controllable within the school or the school system, though, it has to be recognized that many of the factors that inhibit the effectiveness of the school that causes beyond the school's reach. Here the crucial question is whether the school should shrug these off, or attempt to bring them to the notice of appropriate agencies. To do the latter would call for a level of competence in detection and diagnosis on the part of the teacher, and in communication and referral on the part of the school system, that is rarely found in practice. The "helping professions" work in unhappy isolation from each other, with very little understanding of each other's expertise.

An excessive and misguided concern for "human rights" at the present time is not helping. If a teacher is prevented by an exaggerated concept of confidentiality (and even the fear of a libel suit) from finding help for a student, nothing good is accomplished.

More than anything else, though, the problem of definition of objectives, their acceptance by the public, and the evaluation of their attainment, comes through as the principal barrier to real change.

It might be said that education is succeeding when people learn to set reasonable and clear but stringent demands upon themselves and each other. To be able to do so, they must learn to evaluate effort in terms of *significant* outcome. But what is significant? Most adults were, in their day, so conditioned to acceptance of arbitrary and artificial judgements that they feel uneasy with a school system that attempts a more rational approach to evaluation and report. Teachers may favour continuous progress and non-competitive assessment of progress, but most parents still want to see a piece of paper with numbers on it. The traditional examination set out to measure what was spilt between what the teacher poured out and what the student drank in. Many people want to go back to that easy and meaningless measure.

"Achievement" testing sounds so logical, so beguilingly reasonable. But how do you make it workable, honest and just? Consider the quandary of the school principal. Knowing as he (or, too rarely, she) does that, if achievement tests are applied in his school district or his province, the results will be compared, he has

to decide whether to co-operate honestly, at the risk of having the outcome misinterpreted (since the *real* success of the school lies precisely in its ability to retain, and help, those who in academic terms will be "low achievers"), or to boost the average score by telling the weaker students to stay home, thus reinforcing their cynicism about the school system.

Achievement testing, of course, is tied in with access to higher education, which is a mess. Colleges and universities are funded on a count of noses, not according to the wisdom of their policies or the rationality of their course offerings. This discourages any attempt to figure out what a university *ought* to be, or design a selection process accordingly. Scholarships cloud the issue. Their award is based on scores in tests. Should teachers, then, mark easily to help their less prosperous students to win scholarships, or mark hard on the grounds of some dubious concept of academic integrity?

What, after all, is the prime purpose of evaluation? Is it to help or to damn? Supportive evaluation precedes and looks forward to performance; antagonistic evaluation follows and looks back upon it. The former is educationally sound; the latter is better understood by the public.

The problem we keep coming back to is the apparent inability of the school to adjust to changes in its population. The "new" mathematics, for instance, with its highly academic slant, was not designed for the new school population. In more general terms, the assumptions made by the school about the goals and the values of its students are often quite wrong in relation to the society of the region in which the school operates. How, for example, does the school accommodate to attitudes and value perceptions in a community in which work is seasonal – fishing communities, for instance, where, as often as not, the child is seriously neglected during the working season, and where, equally often, the atmosphere in the home in the off-season is contrary to the message of disciplined regularity that the school is transmitting? These are extreme cases, perhaps, but an issue is often presented with greatest clarity when the example is found in an extreme situation. There are many coastal communities in which both parents work long and irregular hours during the fishing season – father on the boats, mother in the processing plant – and draw unemployment insurance for the other half of the year. The children of these homes very often come to school unfed and without adequate sleep. Homework and "research" assignments are meaningless for them. The irregularity of parental employment leaves them with no clear model, either positive or negative, of the world of work. What are the real needs of these kids? What do "academic standards" mean to them? How can they be brought to the notion of either building a better life in their own community or preparing for migration, to make a success of living in a totally different environment? What are the implications, for

such matters as curriculum and evaluation, of a serious attempt to make school useful to them?

Without looking to such extreme cases, though, we find (as teachers repeatedly pointed out to me) that there is a growing dissonance between the breadth of the field of students' interests (stimulated particularly by television) and the narrowness of school programs. The result is that success in school becomes, in the eyes of the student, less and less important.

Most certainly the remedy does not lie in more effective specialization. In retrospect, it is astonishing that at the very moment when the generalization and democratization of secondary education were being accepted for the first time as prime requirements, curriculum reform was at the same time reaching towards new courses in (for example) mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology which represented the university's idea of efficient preparation for higher study, which for the majority of students were worse than useless, and which certainly provided no basis for generalized reform.

This is not to be read as a condemnation of academic rigour. It is increasingly evident, however, that if we cannot get things into a healthy proportion, if we cannot differentiate between (a) the need for a basic education in life skills for everyone (in which evaluation of progress must be totally supportive, forward-looking and non-selective), (b) the need to get across to adolescents the nature of the options open to them in choosing a way of life that offers work satisfaction, stability, dignity and self-fulfilment, and (c) the need for precise and rigorous training in those areas of skill and knowledge that individuals *choose*, knowingly and responsibly, to pursue, and if we cannot develop modes of instruction, evaluation, motivation and reward appropriate to those three different sets of purposes, the whole enterprise of public secondary education may well be irretrievably discredited.

VIII. THE JOB OF TEACHING

Most occupations are tolerable. Few are exciting or fulfilling.

Teaching, on the other hand, tends to be a job of extremes. If the situation is good, it can be a tremendously exciting and satisfying occupation. If it is not, it is likely to be unendurable.

This is something that not many people outside the profession realize. The demands made upon nervous and emotional energy by the need to function all day as an animator, mediator, and focussing device for the activities of scores of highly volatile teenagers are enormous. If things go well, and if the teacher is lucky enough to have the right kind of natural disposition, combined with solid competence, the good moments are beautiful, full of a dynamic sense of accomplishment, and the bad moments are only temporary set-backs. If things go badly, – steadily and regularly, – or if the teacher lacks zest or competence, school is hell and the demands of teaching are a corrosive, destructive torment. Either way, the stress level is much higher than in most other occupations.

Very few teachers feel that they were well enough prepared to come into the job with real confidence. The two areas in which inadequacy is felt most keenly (in spite of some notable improvements in recent years) are curriculum development and teacher-student relationships.

These, of course, are two sides of the same coin. In creating and fleshing-out the curriculum, the essential is to fit the selected program to the realities of the student's personality, needs and state of readiness; in inter-acting with students, the goal must be to engage them effectively in a constructive, collective effort of discovery and development along the path of the curriculum. Unless the teacher can function well in both areas the student's learning will be impeded, the teacher will be unhappy, and the school will be doing less than it can and less than it should.

Before the teacher ever enters into the responsibilities of practice, some way has to be found to make him or her aware of these practical realities, to get across a real understanding of the factors involved, and to help him or her to develop a strong, effective and authentic style of operation.

Teacher education has to start with some *un*learning. Most people come to it with a strongly formed image of "proper" teacher behaviour – formed, unfortunately, by memories of how they saw their own teachers. This is not entirely bad, since the only thing that counts in the reality of the classroom is what actually gets

through to the student. But it is inadequate, since what people remember are perceptions that were highly personalized, biased, short-term and immature. Students see their teachers as individuals, with more clarity than they are usually given credit for; but their understanding of the role and function of a *teacher* is neither broad nor deep. There is no truism more overworked, in the whole field of education, than the statement that beginning teachers, when they find themselves operating on their own responsibility for the first time, tend to teach as they were taught. It would be more accurate, though, to say that they tend to try to play the role that they thought they saw their own teachers playing in the past. And there are three things wrong with that. One is that they may have been wrong about what they thought they saw. The second is that their teachers may have been wrong in their choice of role. The third is that the role that was appropriate even half a dozen years ago may not be appropriate now.

This problem should be attacked head-on in the first months of teacher education.

One of the toughest problems in teacher education is that of involving student-teachers effectively in the real life of a school, without losing the objectivity and critical detachment that the university should provide. Some universities report positive results from programs that have students observing, and conferring weekly with co-operating teachers, during the fall, then teaching through January and February in one school and through March and April in another, with full participation in extra-curricular activities, staff meetings and so on.

When the moment of "real" entry into teaching arrives, though, it always brings anxiety – even fear – and, this of course is what brings the beginner back to role-playing.

The initial year is, in some ways, more of an ordeal than it ever was, because respect for teachers (never to be counted on) is less automatic than ever. And yet respect *will* be given – perhaps more genuinely than ever in the past – if it is earned. The need to earn it, and the lack of the shield of automatic status, have very important implications for the beginning teacher. A period of induction, with a light teaching load and ready access to help, is clearly necessary – and is almost never provided.

The first goal of such an induction period, of course, must be to develop a confident, genuine style in the teacher-student relationship. I stress "genuine", in contrast to role-assumption, because, as earlier remarked, students look for and respect sincerity and openness, and may feel deeply frustrated by an encounter that has left the teacher feeling comfortable and satisfied with his or her display of

professional competence. A good relationship is more easily observed than described. A lot of teachers settle for joviality, which is a useful device, but is no proof of openness to real communication from students – may, indeed, be an armour against it.

The slow progress made by the concept of induction is one of the major mysteries of education. One feels that by now the authorities would have conceded, and acted upon, the most obvious of truths: that in a changing society, new teachers are required to teach in schools that are (or should be) unlike those in which they were taught, and experienced teachers must necessarily find that much of their experience is invalid as a guide to future action. It is true that most teachers, in the past, came to terms with the realities of their job by developing techniques of domination based on their own recollections of school, and reinforced those techniques year by year. For many, the sense of security gained through this process of increasing certainty served as a basis for the confident exercise of judgment, initiative and originality. For some, it was all there was – their refuge and their strength, a very present help in time of troubles.

But those were more stable times. In a phase of social change and turbulence, some better process of initial guidance must be found than the imitation of an ill-remembered past. There are challenging roles here for the teacher education institution, the educational leadership in the school, and the entire teaching force, and a target of the highest priority for those concerned with the improvement of teaching conditions.

High on the list of teacher concerns is the problem of discipline – the control of student behaviour. That it has to be controlled is self-evident, and it is a pity that we have become so squeamish about saying so. Even one individual alone has the problem that, unlike most animals, he or she has the power to choose ways of behaving that may be self-destructive. Put two together and you have the added problem of mutual harm.

One of the things that worry teachers most – and not only beginning teachers, but veterans too – is that they do not know how far they can go, or to what extent they can count on support from parents, from the authorities of the school system, or from the adult community in general, in controlling student behaviour. Many children and adolescents, daily, are suffering brutal and long-lasting injury, physical or psychological, at the hands of their peers because teachers are deterred from timely and effective intervention by fear of prosecution. Specific blame sometimes attaches to out-of-school agencies in this regard. In one eastern city, for example, the Executive Director of the local Children's Aid Society gained a few weeks' publicity with an attack on teachers and principals as agents of cruel repression.

The special problem of the teacher, of course, is the disruptive effect that a few antogonistic students can have upon a group learning situation. Expunents of behaviour modification offer advice on the arts of suasion and dissuasion; but the difficulties somehow seem, in reality, to have dimensions beyond their skills. For one thing, reasonable attempts to persuade or dissuade simply will not work in hard-core cases, and it is probably too late to attempt that approach at the high school level if it has not been tried (or has not succeeded) earlier. Besides, the behaviour modification approach tends to assume that the student accepts certain basic premises which the conditions of his home life and his personal orientation may in fact negate. Assumptions about the kind of response that will be seen as reinforcing certain kinds of behaviour may be sadly mistaken, and the basic assumption that the troublesome student *cares* whether he provokes a positive or negative response may be wrong too. Prolonged fencing or negotiation with trouble-making students drains a teacher's energies, consumes time and attention, and leads to neglect of the less turbulent (and therefore to their demoralization). It also encourages students to feel that there is no basic code of behaviour – that everything is negotiable. This tends to reduce the sense of security, and the adolescent reaction to that, more often than not, is either to retreat into contemptuous aloofness or to probe for a frame of reference through increasingly provocative behaviour. (An extreme case occurred when a delegation of students from a "free school" appeared before a city school board to present a declaration on students' rights. They were not impressed by the trustees, and showed their disdain by stealing their name plates. One of the delegation was caught in the act of slipping the Chairman's gavel into his sleeve.)

Behaviour in class is not the only problem. As individual time-tabling develops, the question of the use by students of their unscheduled time grows more acute. Where do they go and what do they do when they are not in class? Whose responsibility are they then?

Nor are the unscheduled hours the only reason for students to be on the loose. Drop-out, truancy, and class avoidance are increasing problems – problems because the things that students choose to do with the free time they have given themselves, or been given, are rarely constructive or socially beneficial.

The strongest element in out-of-class misbehaviour is anonymity. In the small rural community, where everybody knows everybody, the problems are less severe. In the cities, or in the mass atmosphere of regional comprehensive schools, vandalism and crime – robbery, extortion, assault and drug peddling – offer relatively safe possibilities for exciting adventure.

The other side of the out-of-class discipline problem is that the increasingly individualized approach to program structuring, together with the increase in the

size of schools, makes it very difficult to spot the presence of an intruder. You just can't challenge everybody who walks down the hall. There is simply too much traffic. The intruder who comes in to steal, or to prey in various ways upon the students, has to be screened out somehow; but in a school where students may roam with relative freedom they can be extremely and openly resentful of challenge.

"Hall duty", which was always an irksome addition to teaching duties, has become a highly distasteful ordeal, a duty which the teacher simply cannot carry out satisfactorily because any kind of challenge may provoke abusive, insulting and even threatening responses.

Total freedom in the school precincts does not work: it assumes that good will and honesty are universal, and they are not.. There must be designated recreation and study areas for use during non-scheduled time, with clear rules of behaviour. Transit areas must be restricted to legitimate users -- students going between classes or on approved errands. This is one instance in which the interests of the collectivity, the need for peace and good order, absolutely must take precedence over individual freedom.

As for the twin problems of indiscipline in class and class avoidance: the remedy here lies in strengthening the teacher-student relationship. Extra-curricular activities pay off handsomely in improved teacher-student rapport. So does the "adviser" system referred to earlier, which ensures that there is at least one teacher whom the student *knows*, who can be brought in on the discussion of problems. So do contacts with home and parents. These aspects of *being* a teacher, which some teachers, early in their career, see as irritating "extras", are integral to the profession of teaching, and in the long run make the job both easier and more satisfying.

The teacher faced with a discipline problem in class must realize that a class is an unnatural grouping, in that it has no common goal except that imposed by the school. Structurally, there are three possibilities: disintegration into individual and small group activity ("disorder"), unity under the authority (or leadership) of the teacher, and unity in opposition to the teacher. There is, nevertheless, in the group, some informal structure, some nucleus of leadership or influence, and the successful teacher builds on this by offering responsibilities to the degree that students are capable of accepting them. Students react well if their preferences are respected within a clearly indicated range, if the teacher is inclined to praise (moderately and believably) rather than to blame, and if he or she helps students to define attainable goals and to evaluate their own performance, to make reasonable choices and commitments, to feel their way towards autonomy.

Only a few teachers can be successful autocrats, and then only if students sense, behind the apparent tyranny, a genuine benevolence and scrupulous fairness.

The teachers who fare worst are the aloof "scholar", to whom the presence of the student seems almost irrelevant, the fussy teacher who engages in intense, indecisive and ineffectual activity (often provoking deep contempt by uttering dire threats that are never acted upon), and the sentimentalist (whose emotional vulnerability is quickly seen and brutally dealt with).

In all these situations, in-class and out-of-class, some principle of discipline must exist in support of the teacher. If any one principle is valid, it is probably that which underlies the "contract" relationship earlier referred to. School authorities must show that they believe that attendance at school benefits the student (and should recognize that, for one reason or another, even if it be only a matter of social development, the overwhelming majority of adolescents do want to remain part of the school community). It should be made clear that participation in the life of the school is a matter of mutual agreement, and subject to acceptance of certain reasonable conditions and conventions, and that violation of these will automatically and inevitably lead to suspension. Only that kind of clear and inflexible framework can give the teacher a decent chance.

Even if the teacher really enjoys the job of teaching, though, there is frustration in the flatness of the career profile. This has been intensified by the progressive raising of entrance requirements, which must eventually lead to the reduction of categories to one or two. Few jobs offer so little reward for distinctive merit, so little gratification of ambition, so little chance of promotion, as teaching does. The depressing effects of this are intensified by a curious phenomenon: in few occupations is so much hostility shown to those who do obtain promotion.

Perhaps these two facts are naturally related. Sooner or later most teachers come to wish that they could enjoy the satisfaction of a definable upward step. In the meantime, those who do win promotion are at once placed in a position where they have to decide on the priorities to be given to the competing demands of their unpromoted colleagues. Since one of the most irritating factors in the teacher's life is the frustration of having his or her bright ideas vetoed because of lack of funds, or shortage of supplies, or considerations of administrative feasibility which are seldom fully or satisfactorily explained and even less often accepted by the teacher, antagonism is almost inevitable. To rule on priorities is an inescapable duty of anyone whose responsibilities extend beyond one classroom; and it is a guarantee of provoking resentment in those whose requests are ruled out.

Perhaps it is the need to cultivate indifference in the face of resentment (as an alternative to growing an ulcer) that makes senior administrators so often insensitive to the feelings of teachers within the school. Earlier, for example, reference was made to the value of extra-curricular contacts in establishing a good teacher-student rapport. Where this is understood by teachers, and voluntarily undertaken in a spirit of genuine professionalism, impressive results are seen. In one large urban jurisdiction, though, the administration set the cause of professionalism back quite dramatically by unilaterally introducing the term "co-curricular". Many teachers did previously believe in and apply that concept: but when something that was done willingly, in a co-operative and collegial spirit, is abruptly transformed by the employer into a job requirement, it just is not the same.

"I trained to teach mathematics", protested one teacher. "I'm a good mathematician and a damn good math teacher. Now I feel the Board is telling me that they're not interested in my professional ability unless I'm prepared to coach ping-pong! "

In that same jurisdiction, incidentally, morale was further injured by a penny-pinching decision to make heads of departments teach a full load – while holding their allowance at an average 8% of basic salary. "And that," said one, "goes along with decentralization of curriculum and the introduction of school-based course development. I'm denied the possibility of getting around to see teachers and students in action. I have to work things out as best I can in evenings and on week-ends, on top of my own preparation and correction and professional reading. I reckon I put in five thousand hours a year on the duties of department head – so the Board values that work at thirty cents an hour! "

Antagonism towards the promoted teacher reaches its peak in the attitude of many teachers towards principals. Human beings being what they are, there are all kinds of reasons for this. In a profession in which opportunities for promotion are so limited, it is inevitable that some people will find the grapes sour – will profess scepticism about the grounds for selection, or will declare it to be a point of honour not to respect or to defer to seniority. Principals don't always help, either – defensive bluster, indecisiveness and arbitrary caprice are not unknown.

But the truth is that teachers and principals cannot hope to succeed *in spite* of each other. The principal must embody a perceived and shared commitment, the collective purpose of the teaching body, and he must mediate events and relationships in such a way as to retain the teachers' trust in his will and his ability to do so.

There has been much talk about the election of principals. This calls for a high degree of faith in, and understanding of, the electoral process. Considering

that the level of trust in the "democratic" process is generally low in Canada at the moment (and perhaps rightly so, since it operates with little understanding and less integrity, and has been much discredited by the electoral successes of self-seeking opportunists and the surrender of power by legislatures to party discipline and bureaucratic regulation), any such expectation would seem to be somewhat optimistic. Perhaps it would work better in the small and (presumably) select constituency of a school staff, but it really must be asked whether an electoral campaign is, potentially, a better procedure for selecting someone for the clearly definable duties of a highly accountable executive position than those which are at present customary.

Four themes recur in conversations with teachers. The most common is the uneasiness that many experienced teachers feel about the shift from the authoritarian, selective, subject-centred mode to a choice-based, supportive, student-centred style. Many feel that old values are being dissolved without new ones being substituted. They feel that they are being under-valued and harassed by the presence of uncommitted students (the kind that a British writer referred to as having a "freelance" attitude), and have lost both status and confidence. They are not prepared, either technically or emotionally, to make the effort to motivate such students or engage their energies constructively. Some feel that to do so is already to compromise "standards". Even those who are trying to adjust often feel that they are caught in the trap of having to justify a new style of education by the application of old styles of measurement, which must necessarily give a bad reading.

Second is the problem of discipline – the impact on the school of uncertainty and permissiveness in society.

Third is the subjective aspect of these two elements – the enormous increase in stress and decrease in satisfaction that have accompanied the change in the climate of the school.

Fourth – a cause of particularly bitter resentment – is the steady, measurable and indefensible impairment of the conditions of teaching and learning, by the deliberate actions and conscious policy decisions of school boards and, more especially, provincial governments. Teacher load is being steadily increased, time for planning, curriculum development and even for attention to immediate student needs is being cut down, and auxiliary services are being reduced. At the same time, more and more is being demanded of the teacher as developer of curriculum and designer of program, and few jurisdictions yet offer adequate support in these tasks.

At a time of significant (even if insufficient) change in the style of operation of the secondary school, when massive efforts of in-service education and retraining are needed to help teachers to make a successful adjustment and make the new

approaches work, and at a time when the changing social climate makes the whole business of interaction with adolescents far more stressful and demanding than ever, governments seem bent upon denying the possibility of success, with-holding the means of meeting essential needs, and making the job of teaching almost impossibly difficult. Small wonder that anxiety, discontent and outright cynicism are at an all-time high. The remarkable thing, in fact, is that in spite of stress, doubt and a great deal of frustration, the overwhelming majority of teachers continue to give so much of themselves to their job.

IX. SOME CONCLUSIONS

When we have arrived at a precise and complete definition of the word "adult", and when we have established a perfect society, there will be little difficulty in creating a perfect school system. Until then, the performance of the educational system is bound to be disappointing. The more *real* the process of education is – the more firmly grounded, that is to say, in the realities of people's needs and aspirations and the nature of the real world – the less predictable will be its outcome, the less rigid will be its structures and standards, and the more untidy and imperfect it will seem to be. Tidiness, self-assurance and authority are the marks of a centralized and artificial system. Many people, of course, would prefer to see a highly artificial system restored, precisely because it would restore a comforting illusion of tidiness and authority, certainty and control. By excluding what it cannot cope with, it would improve its "accountability". "The school should only try to do what it is capable of doing" is a common slogan, and a highly immoral one. The only moral course of action is for the school to try to become capable of doing what people need to have it do.

That kind of transformation is not yet in sight. Teaching and learning conditions are not good enough, and are getting worse. Classes are too big, the number of teacher-student contacts is too high, planning time is lacking, time for consultation with students about their problems is almost non-existent, back-up services (across the whole range from psychological counselling and career guidance to remedial study centres and curriculum development advice) are pitifully inadequate. The pressure on the teacher to revert to lecture-and-test is enormous, even while he is being exhorted to develop innovative and more fruitful methods.

Promising new ideas, especially those which seek an effective link with local needs and community resources, run into administrative resistance. There is always the fear that everyone will want the same, or equivalent, "privilege", or freedom, and thus throw the system into chaos and disarray; there is fear that unforeseen costs will drain the budget, or that public misunderstanding will bring odium upon the administration. Most administrative structures are designed to keep things as uniform and regular as possible, rather than to facilitate innovation. Progressive and imaginative administrators, on the other hand, may be hampered by unsympathetic and conservative school boards and, even more seriously, by the difficulty of providing for the adequate participation of teachers (and the re-orientation, retraining and workshop programs that would make participation effective). In few jurisdictions do the responsible administrators speak out often enough, explicitly enough or with enough conviction to counter the clamour of universities for narrow and premature academic specialization in the high school.

There are exceptions – store-front operations in inner cities, extended-day experiments, abandonment of "class" structures in favour of total individualization, learning unit contracts, peer teaching – but their scale is small, and they are spoken of with diffidence rather than with pride.

Teacher competence is largely, and wrongly, taken for granted. The potential is very high, but far too many teachers are still in grave doubt about what is expected of them and where to start. Programs of in-service training, realistic and specific, are an urgent necessity to which governments and boards continue to turn a blind eye. A prior requirement, of course, is to find and train the tutors and animators needed to operate such programs.

Teacher autonomy is loudly proclaimed and seldom accorded. Administrations generally are still afraid of public reaction to substantial reform, and cling to the anchors of examination scores and report forms. In any case, autonomy cannot be practised without competence, and in the absence of the kind of re-training mentioned above, most teachers will simply go on doing what they know best, and what students have been trained to expect – lecturing and questioning.

Teachers are seldom allowed adequate participation in the determination of school policy. Until they are, they will continue to feel a low level of professional solidarity – see themselves, unrealistically, as individual practitioners in competition with others, rather than as participants in the collective educational effort of the school. The weakness of the collective professional consciousness is a major cause of failure in school reform and of poor teacher morale.

Teachers have long operated in a highly restrictive climate, in which almost all decisions were handed down from above. In recent years, as teacher qualifications improved, the level of real initiative rose sharply: teachers have exercised their own judgment as individuals to a much greater extent, and many of the official regulations have become dead letters. In some jurisdictions, there is a risk that this particular kind of autonomy, limited though it is, and lacking the necessary complement of co-operation and collective planning, may be impaired, paradoxically, by the growing strength of the teacher organization. Collective agreements which, in the attempt to protect teachers from exploitation, go into excessive detail regarding the school situation, are already, in some places, placing restraints and constraints upon the exercise of individual judgment that are more constricting than adminstrative regulation ever was – and more energetically enforced. There is a real danger that "teacher welfare" policies pursued without sufficient regard for the teacher's professional commitment may alter the nature of the job in ways that will alienate the good and enthusiastic teacher, to the long-

term disadvantage of the association. Already, in fact, one can find situations where teachers are evading the restraints of the collective agreement just as they used to evade the snares of departmental regulations.

Official policy is too often inadequate or totally lacking, and commitment lamentably unclear, in relation to educational reform, in the following areas:

- purposes, both general and specific, of secondary schooling;
- democratization of secondary education;
- teacher education and induction to the profession;
- learning conditions;
- relationship with, and involvement of, parents and the public (especially in relation to discipline)
- teacher load (particularly with respect to the "non-teaching" aspects of the job);
- protection of teachers against unreasonable harassment in the name of the "rights" or "privacy" of students;
- protection of the physical, emotional and mental health of teachers.

These are matters in which teacher organizations should have their own strong policies and assert them strongly. They are also matters in which agreement is needed among teachers on a *nation-wide* scale.

Direct help to teachers is needed on a much bigger scale, (and might be provided by their associations) in such matters as:

- induction: adjustment and counselling during the first two years;
- discipline: the resolution of actual problem situations;
- curriculum development and the design of teaching-learning materials.

Serious study, decision about objectives, and vigorous campaigns in pursuit of those objectives, are needed in the areas of:

- career profile; - promotion policies and relationships between promoted and unpromoted teachers;
- administrative styles;
- the nature of the professionality of the teacher;
- rationality in salary schedules, and the computation of appropriate allowances of money and time to correspond to valid concepts of professionality and responsibility.

These matters, also, should be tackled vigorously by the teacher organizations on a nation-wide scale.

The teaching profession might well – and, indeed, *should* – launch its own programs, in a regular and consistent manner, for the improvement of teaching (a Canadian Institute for Studies in Teaching, created by and answerable to the profession, could be a tremendously powerful instrument for betterment).

Mistakes have been made along the way by a profession that, although organized with far greater efficiency than any other occupational group, is still unsure of its collective purposes.

There has been a lack of clarity, for example, in distinguishing between those matters which should be tackled at the local, provincial and national levels. Broadly speaking, specific curriculum adjustment and specific matters of school organization (including experimentation) should be treated as local concerns, with advisory resources and research support called in as required.

Political and administrative decisions – the policies that will permit, support or inhibit local activity – are a provincial concern, since provincial autonomy applies to them.

Matters which are germane to the nature of the profession (as identified in previous paragraphs) should be pursued at the national level.

In other words: that which is political (i.e. subject to the executive decision of a legislature and/or its civil service) is almost always a matter for action at the provincial level. (Inter-provincial *consultation* is increasingly necessary, though. *It is increasingly clear that legislators and administrators are reacting not only to what happens in their own provinces but to what they see happening in other provinces.)* That which is professional – matters that should be determined by the realities of the nature and purpose of the school and the characteristics of the job of teaching – calls for a position to be taken by the Canadian teaching profession as a whole; and policy positions so adopted should become guidelines for negotiators working within provincial jurisdictions to secure better teaching and learning conditions.

Teachers have strong feelings about many aspects of the school situation, and do not always find ways of expressing them. There is clear need for bold and confident leadership – not just to pander to the expressed desires of vocal groups, because to do so draws the leader into parochialism, factionalism and negative self-justification, and not to impose pre-determined doctrine, but to articulate clear goals for change and draw the broad lines of strategy. It would probably be timely

for some of the major questions outlined above to be tackled by strong and broadly-based national commissions, organized and led, but not monopolized, by the teaching profession.

Poised in uncertain balance at the mid-point of a revolution that seems to have lost both its drive and its purpose, the secondary school shows the dislocating effects of one system imposed upon another – internal incompatibility and fundamental doubt, the worst of both worlds. It has barely emerged from a tradition of service to a conservative, repressive society, the comfortable role that we used to see in its most exalted form in the great public schools of England (in which boys came to love, honour and eventually imitate their tormentors), and which we still see in the self-righteously authoritarian schools of the USSR. It has entered upon an uncertain search for a democratic commitment (the most difficult of all modes, because it requires the consent of the governed, which is a fraud unless consent is based on *knowledgeable, responsible* choice). It seeks to involve its "community", but those adults who come forward are too often those who were won over to unquestioning faith in the old model, and who see today's adolescent as the major agent in social disruption. Many hanker after the old days when school was an effective instrument of punitive vindictiveness, and are eloquent in asserting the immorality of allowing choice.

In this confusion the adolescent, already demoralized by the turbulence of a society which seems to have lost its hold on the democratic ideal and to be groping for it in a welter of pointless permissiveness, seems to react to discipline with concerted defiance, and to freedom with irresponsibility and misuse of options. And yet, where teachers have succeeded in maintaining the strength of their own ideals, where the over-riding emphasis is placed on honesty and openness in person-to-person encounter and in the approach to learning, where teacher initiative is encouraged and responsibility accorded to it, and where counselling is regularly, responsibly and seriously undertaken, good things are being done.

If the authorities who rule Canadian education would renounce the folly of their claim to have no responsibility to or for, or participation in, any community beyond the population of their own province; if they would admit to the extreme similarity of the experience of teachers and students in schools all across Canada, regardless of jurisdiction or language, and to the relevance of the outcome of any experiment, anywhere, to students and teacher everywhere, it might be a little easier to find out what those good things are, and so at least to come to the decision whether to push for completion of the democratizing revolution, or to revert to a domesticating and selective system.

If, eventually, the decision is made to push for further reform, it will have to be recognized that fumbling adjustments and tentative probing will not suffice. The second half of the revolution will require firm and clear resolve, explicit policy (much of which, to be fair, already exists on paper, in terms of objectives at least, in *some* provinces) and systematic planning. It will have to be prepared for, in other words, along the lines suggested earlier in this chapter, before specific action is undertaken on any significant scale.

The options range all the way from a return to elegant and effete scholasticism for a privileged few (as proposed by the west coast university professor who, scolding the present author for his radicalism, pointed out that when the graduates of the better English schools "went up" to university "to read French" in the old days, they had already "read most of the major works of French literature") to the current Chinese insistence on total practicality and condemnation of "aberrant" intellectualism. My own belief is that the needs of Canadians and of Canadian society lie somewhere mid-way between the two, but with a much greater inclination towards practicality than has yet been achieved, that the changes so far accomplished have been more cosmetic than real, and that if we try to rest content with what has been attained – with half a revolution – we shall swing rapidly back to a state of inadequacy that will call into question the whole system of compulsory schooling.